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WEEDEN

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HIS
TIME
NOW
IS

BRANDON WEEDEN
TAKES THE REINS

Volume 41, No. 15



15

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PREVIEW
COWBOYS AT SAINTS

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highlight
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McClure: James Smith/Dallas Cowboys; Victoria: Jeremy Shealy/Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders



HIS TIME IS NOW 34

After a long road of ups and downs, Brandon Weeden gets his chance to take the reins as the Cowboys' starting quarterback.

By Jeff Sullivan



A GIANT STEP 18

From undrafted rookie free agent to now the Cowboys' slot cornerback, Tyler Patmon has proven he won't back down.

By Mickey Spagnola

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DALLAS COWBOYS STAR

Volume 41, Issue 15

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Dallas Cowboys Star Magazine

(ISSN 0745-0370)

is published monthly February to July, weekly

August through January, by Blue Star Media, Ltd.

Subscriptions rate 32 issues for \$39.95.

One Cowboys Parkway, Irving, TX 75063.

Periodical postage paid at Irving, Texas, and at additional

mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to

DALLAS COWBOYS PUBLICATIONS

One Cowboys Parkway, Irving, TX 75063.

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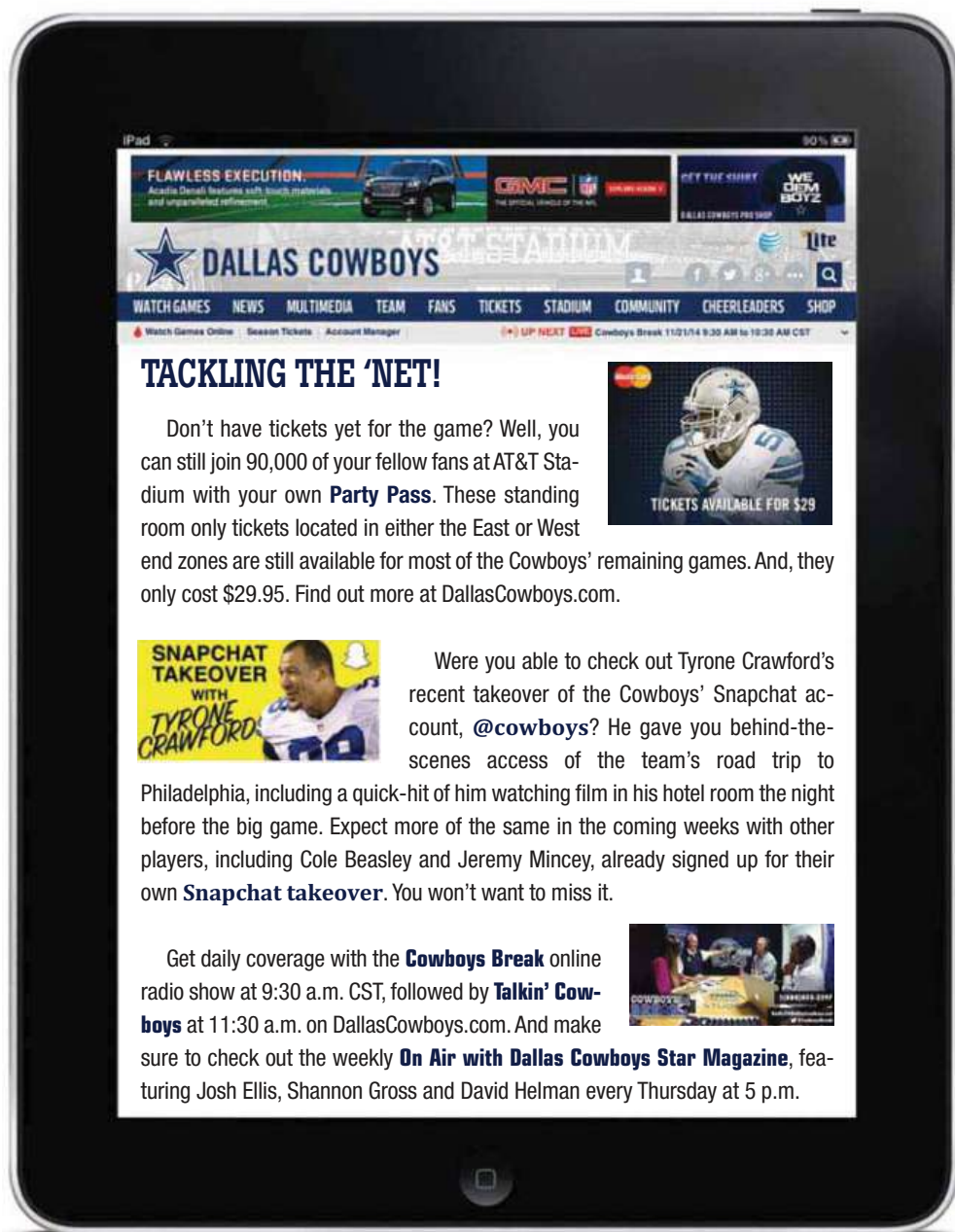
is printed and mailed by Midway Press, Dallas, Texas.



On the Cover:

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Jeremiah Jhass/Dallas Cowboys



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The next issue of Dallas Cowboys Star Magazine will be mailed on Oct. 5, 2015.

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On the Wing

Joseph Randle took to the air late in the second quarter when he dove into the defensive pile from 1 yard out, just nosing the ball over the goal line despite the best efforts of Falcons' safety William Moore. The score was the running back's third of the day, marking the first multi-touchdown game of his career.

— AP Photo/Michael Ainsworth



As an Army logistics officer, Lacy Miske moved a lot of precious cargo. Today, it's not so different.

Over the next five years, more than a million service members will make the transition from military to civilian life. We believe it's our job to help connect them with the jobs, financial education and comprehensive support they'll need to thrive here at home. Case in point: Lacy Miske, who used logistics and managerial skills learned in the Army to transition into a career at Bank of America where she helps oversee the secure delivery of cash to our network of ATMs and financial centers. See Lacy's story at bankofamerica.com/militarysupport



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JOSH ELLIS DOING IT THE HARD WAY



We just thought it was going to be easy. But the NFL has a funny way of correcting such notions, for every team, every season, I'm pretty sure.

The Cowboys are going to have a tough road in the coming months thanks to extended injuries suffered by Dez Bryant and Tony Romo. You know this and they know this. Bryant's fractured foot could keep him out until December, by some estimates. Romo's fractured collarbone may take just as long to heal. There are scenarios that would have both players back sooner, but to have such unfortunate losses strike so early in the season, it's tough to see the glass as half full.

But that doesn't mean that the season is over and that the Cowboys should pack it in. On the contrary, it makes the 2015 campaign all the more interesting, I think.

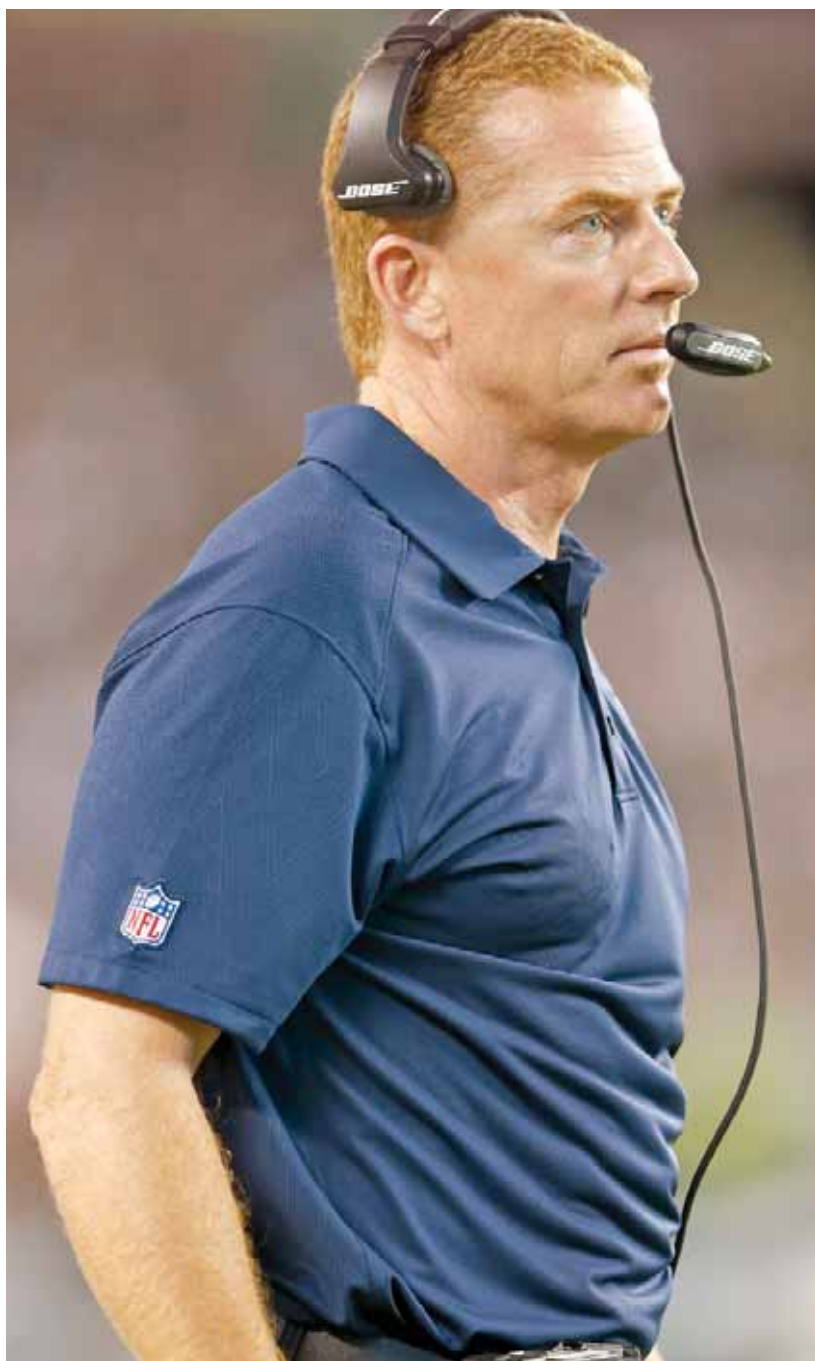
So many of us saw this regular season as merely a prelude to the playoffs, when we would finally find out whether a stacked Cowboys team is ready to take the next step that they were so close to a year ago. But in looking at it that way, it's difficult to focus on the games at hand, to be truly present in the ride along the way.

It's going to be bumpy for sure, but I am not writing this team off. The way the defense has looked for much of the early going, and the way the offense and special teams have managed to make timely plays, it's possible to squint and envision the team still being in decent to good shape by the time the offense's two biggest play-makers are healthy. Putting together consecutive wins early in the season creates some wiggle room for the Cowboys. If they can go .500 between now and, say, Thanksgiving, or even be hovering around that mark, considering the seeming weakness of the NFC East as a whole, it's certainly plausible to think that they could be poised to make a run once Romo and Bryant return.

And that makes now a fascinating time. Think of this current stretch of games when the team is shorthanded as being the playoffs before the playoffs before the playoffs. It's not that the Cowboys have to win every game, but they just have to avoid going into the tank. There's pressure on everyone to perform, from Brandon Weeden, to Terrance Williams, to the offensive line living up to its billing, to the running backs who have yet to truly bust out, to a defense that is going to have to carry the team to some low-scoring wins. There's enough talent here to keep the thing afloat.

But most intriguing of all in the coming weeks and months will be the performance of Jason Garrett. He converted a lot of people into believers in 2014, but was that the greatest test of his coaching ability? The offense simply bullied opponents most weeks. This year, the walk-around head coach will have to keep confidence high in spite of some painful early setbacks.

It'll be fascinating to find out whether this team can stay together long enough to have a chance to live up to the preseason hopes.



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COMMUNITY COWBOYS

ROOKIE CLUB VISITS PRESCHOOL

As part of the Cowboys' Hispanic Heritage Month celebration, the Dallas Cowboys Rookie Club made its first community appearance of the 2015 regular season on Sept. 21 at Mi Escuelita Preschool in Dallas. Mi Escuelita is a local nonprofit serving primarily Hispanic and low-income families, with five preschool locations where children can learn English and prepare for their primary education in a safe and nurturing environment.

Divided between five classrooms with children ages 2-5, the rookies teamed up with UnitedHealthcare volunteers and Fuel Up to Play 60 nutritionists to read a book featuring the ABCs of healthy foods. They then learned how each of these foods fits onto the perfect "MyPlate."



ideal portions of "MyPlate" – half fruits and veggies, half protein and grains with dairy on the side – the kiddos colored their own perfect plate.

Finally, and surely best of all, the children were invited to play piñata, taking swing after swing at a paper mache football. At the peril (and delight) of our rookie players who held the piñatas high, one at a time the kids stepped up to bat until a shower of fruit snacks and granola bars fell to the floor. It was a fun and educational morning for these youngsters.

– Holly Hilburn



COWBOYS ANNOUNCE 'THE FORD CENTER AT THE STAR'

On Sept. 11, Ford Motor Company, the Texas Ford Dealers and the Dallas Cowboys announced a long-term sponsorship extension and naming rights agreement at the Cowboys' new training facility and multi-use event center in Frisco, Texas. This unique venue, like no other in sports, will proudly carry the Ford name and will be known as The Ford Center at The Star.

The complex is scheduled to open in the summer of 2016 for the conclusion of Cowboys training camp and for the start of the Texas high school football season.

"This partnership with Ford Motor Company and the North Texas Ford Dealers will take this facility to the next level," said Cowboys Chief Operating Officer Stephen Jones. "The Cowboys are thrilled to continue this next chapter with our friends at Ford."

As part of the official world headquarters of the Cowboys, The Ford Center at The Star will serve as home for the entire football operations and practice fields. The campus will also include a multipurpose, 12,000-seat, indoor stadium that will provide facilities for use by the Cowboys, City of Frisco and Frisco ISD football and soccer games as well as other athletic, academic, fine arts and entertainment events.



FAVORITE CARTOON OF ALL TIME:

Probably *Rocket Power*



OUT OF BOUNDS JEFF HEATH

WITH

Safety | 24 years old | 3rd NFL season | Saginaw Valley St.

by Ram Luthra

FAVORITE DISNEY MOVIE?

The Jungle Book



WHO WOULD PLAY JEFF HEATH IN A HOLLYWOOD MOVIE?

I like Bradley Cooper. He did a good job in *American Sniper*. I think he would do a good job.

LAST BOOK YOU HAVE READ?

American Sniper. The Chris Kyle story. I really liked it.

FAVORITE PREGAME MEAL?

Just spaghetti and chicken.

DO YOU SING IN THE SHOWER?

No. I have a horrible voice. Never. Maybe I hum.



katy perry or
taylor swift?

Katy Perry



MOUNT RUSHMORE OF MOVIES:

Varsity Blues is one of my favorite movies of all time.

Training Day, *Sandlot* – “You’re killing me smalls” – and probably *Inglorious Basterds*.



FAVORITE RESTAURANT IN THE DFW AREA:

Pappadeaux Seafood Kitchen.

I love the crawfish étouffée.

WHAT CAR DID YOU DRIVE TO WORK TODAY?

I’ve got a GMC Denali truck. It’s black, the F100.

CRISTIANO RONALDO OR LIONEL MESSI?

Messi

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU WILL NEVER FORGET ABOUT VALLEY RANCH?

It’s really tough because there are so many things that mean so much. But the whole thing will be missed. This whole setup of the locker room is so unique where you see all the players. This big square has so much history. There are lockers that Darren Woodson used and other great players. People have signed some of these lockers. All these lockers haven’t changed and that means so much with all the history of it.

If you have questions that you would like answered from players, please submit them via email to editor@dallascowboys.net.

SCOTT BAUER



Scott with wife Kathy, kids Sydney and Colt and their dog, Dallas.

HOMETOWN: Southlake, Texas

WHEN I BECAME A COWBOYS FAN: 1967

FAVORITE ALL-TIME COWBOYS: Bill Bates and Daryl Johnston (They gave their all. Can't ask more).

FAVORITE CURRENT COWBOY: Jason Witten (Kathy is a big fan of University of Tennessee alums.)

MOST-UNDERRATED COWBOY: Tony Romo (He'll be a Hall of Famer and a Super Bowl champion.)

FAVORITE COWBOYS WIN: Watching all the home wins led by Tom Landry, Roger Staubach and Danny White when I was a kid with my grandparents, John and Ruth Taylor, who had season tickets.

MY GAME-DAY RITUAL: Relaxing at home with my family to watch the game, particularly with our dog, Dallas, cuddled up next to us, who just passed away on March 19, 2015. We'll miss you, Dallas. We love you!

MOST-PRIZED COWBOYS POSSESSION: A football from my brother-in-law, Roger Burke, and the various Tony Romo, Deion Sanders and Jason Witten jerseys for our family.

WHAT MAKES ME THE BIGGEST COWBOYS FAN: We named our black Labrador Dallas nine years ago to always remind us of home (work always took us abroad). I have been a lifelong fan since birth. The window to the NFL is solely through the eyes of America's Team. I remember as a child my grandparents telling me, "God put the hole in the roof to watch His team play."

COWBOYS ARE: What "Texas Forever" represents to us (referencing the *Friday Night Lights* TV series). The Dallas Cowboys brought us together for so many cherished family memories throughout our life.

Dallas Cowboys United members may submit Fan Profile answers and photos (jpeg, 300 dpi) for consideration to editor@dallascowboys.net or mail to *Dallas Cowboys Publications*, Attn: Editor, Fan Profile, 1 Cowboys Pkwy, Irving, TX 75063-4924. Photos cannot be returned. Dallas Cowboys Star Magazine reserves the right to edit answers.

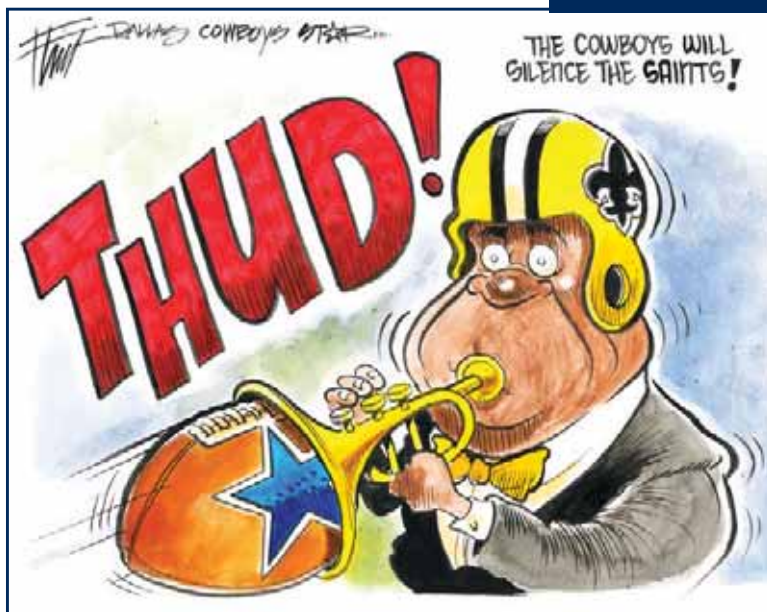
HIDDEN TREASURE

Buried down in the archives of the Cowboys' rich history lies a bounty of unique, and oftentimes strange, memorabilia.

To see just how far the NFL has come, one needs look no further than today's cleats. In his first year with the Cowboys, Bob Lilly wore these spiffy clogs that had little to no padding and basically screws and bolts on the bottom for whatever traction could be gained (which was next to nothing). Compare those to the Nike boots now being worn by Dez Bryant. Just think what the Hall of Famer Lilly could have done in this high-tech footwear.



Flint's View



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Mickey Spagnola ★ ***Daryl "Moose" Johnston***

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Mondays @ 5:15pm

Mike Florio

Fridays @ 8:30am



ON THE SIDELINES with Kristi Scales

CHAD HENNINGS: FORCES OF CHARACTER



Chad Hennings, who won three Super Bowl rings during his nine seasons as a Cowboys defensive tackle (1992-2000), has an impressive résumé. The retired Air Force pilot is also well

known for flying jets over Iraq in the Gulf War.

But his friends refer to him as a loving family man and one of the finest, most upstanding individuals they know. He's uniquely qualified to guide a conversation about the importance and definition of character. And that's exactly what he does in his new book *Forces of Character: Conversations About Building a Life of Impact*.

"I wanted to write a book to start a conversation in our country about character," says Chad. "Character is kinetic. The decisions we make have an effect on whether we get to where we want to be in life. Life is a series of choices. The book is conversations with 10 individuals who did it the right way and made the right choices. These are people that I have a relationship with, and each has had an impact on me."

Of the 10 extraordinary people telling their stories, three are former Cowboys: Roger Staubach, Troy Aikman and Jason Garrett. Also included are Spurs head coach Gregg Popovich; Auschwitz survivor Dr. Edith Eva Eger; former Space Shuttle commander Tom Henricks; human rights attorney Virginia Prodan; Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas; Dallas Life executive director Bob Sweeney; and National Center for Fathering CEO Carey Casey.

"I open the book with a story in which I stole a football card from a little girl," notes Chad. "I was in second or third grade and spent the night at a friend's house. The two of us and his little sister collected football cards. I was a Vikings fan and she had Fran Tarkenton cards. We took her cards and she started crying. We felt that guilt inside and returned the cards."

"I shared that story with Roger Staubach and he told me that he had a similar story when he was young. He stole a small Virgin Mary icon from a bookstore near the Catholic School he attended. The next day he was crying, and his mother asked



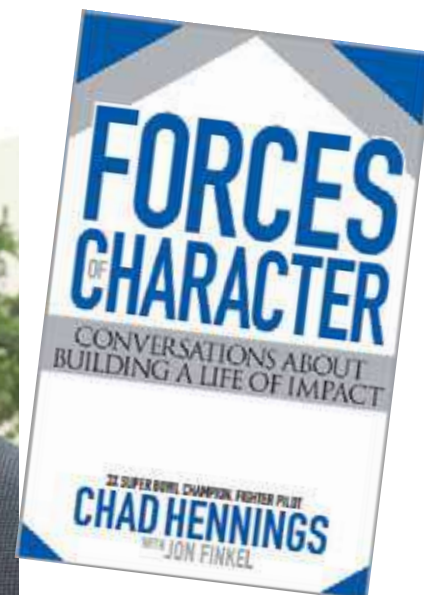
HENNINGS

him what was wrong. He confessed and his mom made him take the long, slow walk back to the bookstore and admit what he did.

"Roger also tells of his experience in Vietnam when he was faced with a character moment. Supplies went missing during delivery when he was responsible for them as the supply officer. He talks about what he did to counteract that and to hold people responsible. He applies it to playing in the days of the North Dallas Forty Cowboys and setting an example for his teammates. He later built a multi-billion dollar corporation with The Staubach Company, utilizing the same character lessons."

For Chad, it was important to write the book in a conversational style.

"The book lets individuals tell their stories to reveal the truth, which is the choices that you make everyday matter greatly. You don't just wake up one day and decide to rob a bank, just as you don't roll out of bed one day and decide to open a homeless shelter. Our actions are a result of thousands of tiny choices, guided by a moral compass."



His interview subjects reinforced Chad's definition of character.

"A force of character is an individual who lives to be their best self everyday and uplifts others to be their best selves. There is functional char-

acter that includes positive attitude, great determination, persistence, resilience and work ethic. And there's moral character that is courage, humility, honesty, respect, selflessness and self-discipline. All of these apply, whether it's on an athletic field or within the Supreme Court or a concentration camp at Auschwitz. It's all about who you choose to be."

For his part, Garrett was honored that his former teammate included him.

"Chad Hennings is one of the most impressive people I've ever met in my life, and it comes back to his character," says Garrett. "He's accomplished a lot. What he did for our country in the Air Force, the kind of player he was for our football team, the kind of husband he is, the kind of dad he is. He is as good a character as anyone I've met, so when he asked me to talk with him for his book, I thought it was an honor and a privilege. He's been a great friend for a long time, and he's one of my favorite people in the world."

Chad's book is available at ForcesOfCharacter.com or booksellers online such as Amazon or Barnes & Noble.

Do you have a question about the Cowboys or life on an NFL sideline? If so, email Kristi at KScales@DallasCowboys.net or write to: Kristi Scales, Dallas Cowboys Radio Network, One Cowboys Parkway, Irving, TX 75063



With so much to cover in so little time, *On Air with Dallas Cowboys Star Magazine* hosts Josh Ellis, Shannon Gross and David Helman can't address all the great Twitter questions they get from fans each week. So they rounded up the best fan feedback and responded to a few of them here.



 **Rachel Rizzuti** @Rizzuti99
@josh_ellis11 @HelmanDC @Shannon_PG
do you see Brandon Weeden saving the Day for the Cowboys or is the season over

DAVID: Can I pick something in between the two? I definitely don't think Brandon Weeden is going to ball out during this eight-week stretch while Tony Romo is hurt, but I also don't think the season is necessarily over.

SHANNON: There is a weird calm around Valley Ranch considering all of the men that won't be on the field in the upcoming weeks. That leads me to believe that this coaching staff and ownership have seen something in Weeden over the last year.


JOSH: The thing is, you don't have to be a superstar to win games in this league. Quincy Carter won 10 one year. There are ways to win games without your best guys. It's going to take mental toughness and smart coaching.

DAVID: If Dallas can lean on the defense and get the ground game going, then Weeden should be able to do just enough to grab a couple of wins. He only needs to keep them near .500 for the Cowboys to have a chance when Romo returns.

SHANNON: I don't think this team wins the Super Bowl without Romo, though, so he needs to get back and be 100 percent.

JOSH: I think it needs to continue. Unlike the wide receivers, he's typically going to be matched up on a linebacker, so there should be plenty of opportunities to run by people.

SHANNON: Yeah, if you see a linebacker on Lance Dunbar, why not take a shot down the field? It also loosens up the defense, and if they have to move to a dime package to account for his speed, then you

 **Kimberly** @kimbey11
@josh_ellis11 @Shannon_PG @HelmanDC @DCStarMagazine I was surprised they used Dunbar on long passes-think that continues?

pound the ball inside with the run.

DAVID: We haven't seen him take too many carries yet. Scott Linehan has lined him up out wide a lot so far this season, and I don't see any reason why it won't continue. I don't know if that means we'll continue to see him streak downfield on go routes, but it certainly was an interesting wrinkle.

JOSH: If nothing else, he's another guy like Cole Beasley who can create separation underneath. Using him as a receiver should open things up for guys like Terrance Williams and Jason Witten during Dez Bryant's absence.



DAVID: Of course! Anytime.

JOSH: It's always good to talk about bacon.

SHANNON: I don't think bacon needs any explanation, which is all I have to say about that.

DAVID: I like bacon a lot, although, to be completely honest, I think it has jumped the shark a bit in American culture. Do we really need bacon cologne, bacon candy, bacon-themed kitchen utensils and the like? I'm not so sure about that.

JOSH: Yeah, I'd prefer if we kept it limited to a foodstuff.

DAVID: Just one caveat, though: I love my bacon to be kind of soggy and not completely crisp. I don't have time for that crunchy, overcooked bacon that turns to dust in your mouth. Gross.

 **Skyler Thomas** @skyler1118
@josh_ellis11 @Shannon_PG @HelmanDC @DCStarMagazine can you guyz talk about bacon?

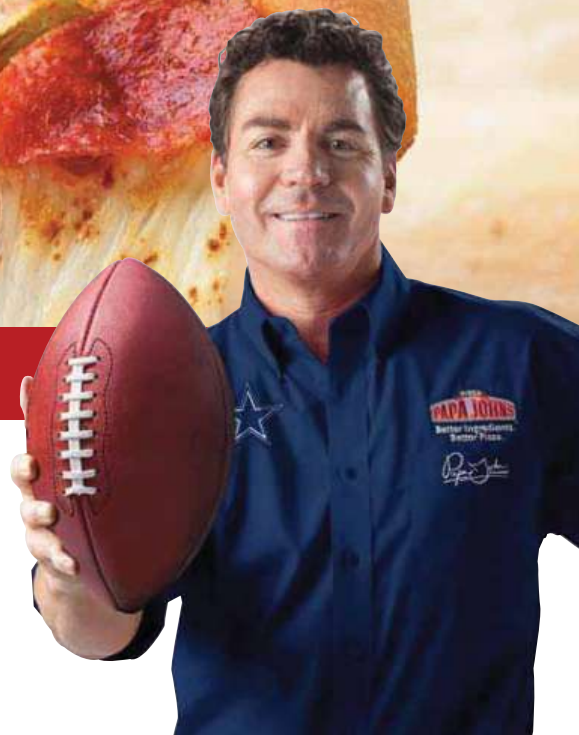
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A GIANT STEP

From undrafted rookie free agent to now the Cowboys' slot cornerback, Tyler Patmon has proven he won't back down.

By Mickey Spagnola

Come follow along on the amazing journey of one Tyler Patmon, a relative football nobody a year or so ago turned big somebody this very day.

A year ago Patmon wore No. 35. He squeezed into the crowded annex part with the rest of the rookies in the Cowboys locker room at AT&T Stadium during the preseason. He was one of those desperate guys playing deep into the second half of the fourth of four NFL preseason games, fighting to keep his boyhood dream alive.

That, though, is what you'd expect from a guy undrafted out of Oklahoma State and unsigned as a rookie free agent, only getting his foot in The Ranch door on a rookie minicamp *tryout* basis.

But when the 2015 season opened under the bright lights of AT&T Stadium and even the brighter ones accompanying *Sunday Night Football* and national television coverage, Patmon was wearing No. 26.

His locker now is in the big room, albeit tucked into a corner in the underbelly of AT&T Stadium.

Why, in that final exhibition game this year he was among the 33 Cowboys players who did not even play in the game, coach's decision. Nearly 12 months later, he had been virtually guaranteed his job, along with nearly all the rest not playing in the preseason finale traditionally reserved for the young and restless. Patmon was now secure as the team's slot cornerback on the first-team nickel defense.

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And on opening night, when the National Anthem played and the gigantic 100-yard America flag was unfurled on the field, there was Patmon, on the Cowboys sideline, ready to go out not only on the kickoff-return team, but also on defense as soon as the Giants moved into their three-receiver set in the Cowboys' 27-26 victory over their NFC East counterparts.

This is the NFL equivalent of going from the Earth to the moon. Talk about a giant step for Patmon's kind.

"To see that progress, to see where I came from, is just a blessing," said the 24-year-old from Round Rock, Texas, who is now an integral part of this 2015 Cowboys squad, no longer having to sweat like last year.

But still, talk about playing "the big room," the stage never larger for a guy who last year at this time was fearful of the phone ringing on the Saturday after the final preseason game. He had absolutely no idea from the end of April 2014 until the last Saturday in August (30th) if he would ever even play football again.

That tenuous, the accompanying pit occupying valuable stomach space you're likely never to forget.

"I just kind of take it day by day," Patmon said of his tilt-a-whirl ride. "Last year, I knew I was good enough to play in this league. But coming from where I came from and the way I came

into this league, it's all about opportunity, so I was blessed with an opportunity last year and now I'm blessed with a big opportunity. Now I've got to make the most of it."

Patmon might not know this, but there was another guy who knew he could play in this league that the Cowboys consulted: former Cowboys head coach, defensive coordinator and secondary coach over a split 18 years, Dave Campo. Get this, when the Cowboys were doing their due diligence on Patmon, they called Campo.

See, Campo was Patmon's defensive backs coach at Kansas in 2012 before the three-year starter, who had already earned his degree from KU, transferred to Oklahoma State in 2013 for one final year of college eligibility.

"Very quick and tough," Campo remembered, giving the Cowboys his seal of approval as "my guy," Campo's expression of goodness.

Must have been an accurate assessment because when talking with Cowboys secondary coach Jerome Henderson, he uses virtually those same words, "quickness" and just how "tough" he is.

"It really is a feel position. You're going to have some growing pains when you go inside because it's such a fast game inside," Henderson

said of those having to play the slot. "Again, I like his awareness, and the more he sees things, he'll get better as he goes.

Cowboys head coach Jason Garrett has a natural affinity for Patmon, of course like himself an undrafted player who comes in and every time he's asked to do something, he does it. The job is never seemingly too big and the stage never seeming too intimidating, no matter if a rookie making his NFL debut or playing on the dime defense in that playoff game last year in Green Bay or trotting into the slot on opening day a few weeks back.

But no matter who is talking about Patmon, that one word "tough" always seems to surface.

And this has little to do with standing up to teammate Dez Bryant that day in training camp. He's just gritty, but also has the wherewithal to be prepared.

"He doesn't say too much. He's small, but has got physical traits," Bryant said of Patmon. "Why do I respect him so much? Because of how he doesn't back down. I respect him, even with the incident we had (in training camp). I respect him because those are the guys who become great football players.

"It's the way he approaches the game, like 'I want to be here and I want respect.' He's got heart. He's a heck of a football player."

Not a bad scouting report, inside and out.

The Cowboys obviously agree. They did not even flinch when Scandrick went down on Aug. 25 in Oxnard, Calif. Patmon had been working as the backup slot cornerback on the nickel. He was the next guy up, and from the way it looked, there was no quivering. The Cowboys did not turn to starting outside cornerbacks Brandon Carr or Morris Claiborne. Nor first-round draft choice Byron Jones. Not even fourth-year veteran Corey White, the team's utility defensive back.

Patmon, you're in.

"Those slot players are unique," defensive coordinator Rod Marinelli said. "Everything is so much quickness playing inside there, and then the instincts are so important there, run, pass, blitz.

"I think it's his quickness, great quickness ... and good instincts."

So this is where the Cowboys were in the secondary without Scandrick through the team's first three games of the 2015 schedule: Carr starts at left cornerback, Claiborne right. Patmon comes into the slot on the nickel. Jones backs up both outside corner spots, plays in the slot on the dime head up on the tight end and backs up at safety. White is the backup slot, one of the backup outside corners and a backup at safety, too.

You play with what you have. As former Cowboys head coach Bill Parcells was partial to say, "You just can't go down to the Texaco and find one."

"We like our man, so he's got to hold up," Marinelli said, mentioning how White, who returned an interception for a touchdown in that final preseason game against the Texans, has been ready for nickel duty, too. "Go with what we've got, and now we've got to go do it."



Which they certainly did in that opener against the Giants when the nightmare known as Odell Beckham Jr. was held to five catches for 44 yards, and Eli Manning's longest completion went for just 19 yards, that to nickel running back Shane Vereen.

That was a whole lot of Patmon's work out there since eventually, with the Giants probing, trying to get something going, they finally moved Beckham into the slot against Patmon. As you can see from the numbers, he didn't do much.

"Thought he did great," Henderson said of Patmon's initial foray into the slot on the Cowboys nickel defense, which was the same assessment Garrett had of his play in what might as well be called the defense's "hot seat."

"He's always been someone who has a real kind of feisty, fighting nature to him," Garrett said of Patmon. "He's a very competitive guy in practice, and he certainly has been in games when he has gotten an opportunity. I think he recognizes where he is, but his approach has been the same. It's been the same since he got here."

And now he's really here, from the Cowboys' standpoint on solid gold ground. Though when trying to make a living in the slot, that ground is always trembling. Who knows, one week it's Beckham staring you in the face, and the next it was the Eagles' Jordan Matthews, physically a bigger challenge. And life was not about to get any easier, the Cowboys then facing the Falcons and their dynamic receiving duo of Julio Jones and Roddy White.

What Patmon knows for sure, though, is this: Those other teams, they know he's a second-year cornerback with limited experience. They know he came into training camp as the backup to one of the NFL's best slot cornerbacks. And for sure, oppo-

nents know he entered the league through the side door, undrafted, unsigned as a rookie, given only a tryout at a rookie minicamp, mind you, to make an initial impression.

But, not to worry, Patmon won't back down. He hasn't yet. Not last year at that minicamp. Not in last year's preseason games. Certainly not when Bryant seemed intent at that camp practice this summer of knocking his brains out. And not early on in this 2015 season when his role on the defense grew immeasurably.

"I definitely have my work cut out for me," Patmon admitted, but promised, "I'll definitely come ready to play."

Which is why he is where he is.

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JEFF SULLIVAN

SOME OF THE THOUGHTS THAT RUN THROUGH AN OVERSIZED, BALD HEAD

Football coaches — high school, college and NFL alike — work a lot of hours. This has been well-documented over the years, perhaps most famously by Joe Gibbs and Jon Gruden, who each slept on the couch in his office a few hours a night just to save the time of driving home. Urban Meyer suffered multiple health issues his last few years at Florida from the stress and a lack of sleep.

I also recall Wade Phillips telling me the only way he could see his father, Bum, growing up during the high school football season was by going down to the fieldhouse and just hanging out. My brother-in-law is an assistant high school coach in Massachusetts and the hours involved, in addition to teaching, are just ridiculous. And that's up there. In Texas it has to be tenfold.

For the most part, though, the stories have kind of disappeared. Or maybe it's just that fans and the media assume the coaches are working crazy hours so no one asks anymore.

In one of three interviews this summer, I asked Cowboys head coach Jason Garrett about his hours.

"It depends on the time of year, and it depends on what's going on that particular day," Garrett said. "There are times when I wake up at 5 o'clock in the morning, there are times I wake up at 5:30 and times I wake up at 6 o'clock, depending on what time I've got to be in. Typically, we have a staff meeting early on in the day, 7:15 usually.

"On OTA and minicamp days, that's typically what we'll do. We'll do that during the season, too. We'll have a brief staff meeting to kind of get everybody going for what the day is going to be, and then we'll get into our day. I'm one of those guys that the way my mind works, I don't like a lot of loose ends, so I work later at night and try to get things tied up before I go to sleep.



TRIVIA TIME

- 1) Name the nine No. 1 overall picks who are currently starting NFL quarterbacks.
- 2) Name the last three Cowboys quarterbacks to start the season as the backup to then win at least four games as the starter by season's end.
- 3) Name the six Cowboys to score four touchdowns in a game.

"So there're some guys that get in earlier and finish up a lot of their work in the morning before they kind of embark on the rest of their day. I try to get all the stuff tied up before I leave here at night, and I just find that I sleep more restfully when I get those tasks completed."

During the season, more times than not, Garrett is at Valley Ranch until 11 p.m., sometimes even to midnight. There are no set hours for a head coach, for any football coach. They stay until the tape has been watched, the game plan is set, the tweaks have been made. The majority of nights during the season, Garrett sleeps maybe four hours, give or take 30 minutes.

"One of the things that I'd like to make clear is a lot of people use the hours as kind of this badge of courage," Garrett said. "If I find myself leaving here too late at night, I'm almost embarrassed that we're not doing this in a more efficient manner. Sometimes things pile up, and 15 unexpected things happen and you've just got to get the rest of the stuff done, and that happens. But for the most part, if we're kind of rolling to the rhythm of things, I don't take great pride in saying I stayed there late and I got up early. Sleep matters.

"The most important time for us in the day is the time that we spend with our players. So when you're in a meeting room, when you're on the practice field, certainly when you get to game day, you need to be alert, you need to be awake, you need to be alive, you need to have great energy. So you have to make sure that you're doing whatever you need to do to be at your best in front of these guys."

The amazing thing about Garrett is that he always seems to possess that high level of energy. He always seems full of intensity and focus. He's fortunate to be able to function on significantly less than the eight or nine hours of recommended sleep. And more than likely that is the case for each member of the coaching staff, and not just with the Cowboys, either, but for the other 31 NFL teams as well.

TRIVIA ANSWERS:

- 1) Peyton Manning (1998), Carson Palmer (2003), Eli Manning (2004), Alex Smith (2005), Matthew Stafford (2009), Sam Bradford (2010), Cam Newton (2011) and Andrew Luck (2012)
- 2) Jon Kitna (2010), Tony Romo (2006) and Steve Beuerlein (1991)
- 3) Dan Reeves, Bob Hayes, Calvin Hill, Duane Thomas, Emmitt Smith (twice) and Terrell Owens

That ran the gamut of emotions, from the first quarter, just nodding your head and thinking, “No Tony Romo, no Dez Bryant, no problem, this team is just fine,” to later, “This is painful to watch, can this game just end already.” It was one of those afternoons – started with optimism and concluded in depression. How is this team going to survive the next two months, especially if the defense isn’t quite as good as we thought?

We have to start with Brandon Weeden because, well, that’s what we as a football viewing country do. We talk about the quarterbacks. The numbers were solid, 22-of-26, broke the franchise record for consecutive completed passes, but they have to take the training wheels off. That’s not something that can happen mid-game, either, doesn’t work that way. Weeden throwing the ball downfield wasn’t in the game plan. Even at the end there, needing two scores in less than three minutes, it was three dump-offs. The Terrance Williams drop was also a simple quick slant.



As for Matt Cassel, he might be No. 2 on the depth chart by Sunday’s game at New Orleans, but Weeden is going to be the starter, barring a complete meltdown. He honestly threw one bad pass, which admittedly was among the worst passes in my eight years of covering this team. (“That was a stupid mistake on my part,” he said afterward.)

Thought Darren McFadden looked great on his one drive, and then no more. It’s time to give him the chance as the primary ball carrier. Joseph Randle started the game with 85 yards on his first three carries. Thereafter, 11 carries for 2 yards. Yes, 2. Not blaming him entirely. The holes weren’t there. The line had its poorest half since 2013. Tyron Smith allowed a sack and was beat another time.

Everyone needs to chill. Meant to say that earlier. Maybe that should have been the first bullet point. Did anyone have the Cowboys going 16-0? The team is hurting, obviously, but the division isn’t loaded, and nine wins should win this thing. Going to be a grind, a grind unlike the last few years without Romo. Thought the defense was at a higher level, and maybe they are. Maybe just one of those days.

Julio Jones is ridiculous. Might be the premier receiver in the game. Of Atlanta’s 35 targets, 20 of them went to Julio. And why not feed him? He’s their guy, and the Cowboys couldn’t contain him, although they did a solid job at first. Brandon Carr and Morris Claiborne were aggressive early, physical, but no one should be covering Julio one-on-one. Would have liked to have seen more safety help. Think Julio breaks the single-season NFL receiving record this year.

Here’s another prediction: Lance Dunbar catches 100 passes. He was a bigger part of the offense to begin with, even more so now with Weeden. But, they have to find a way to get the wideouts involved, especially Terrance Williams, who isn’t looking like a No. 2 guy, never mind a No. 1.

The Cowboys had 295 offensive yards in the first half, 52 in the second. That is stunning and inexplicable. Heard a lot of folks after the game talking about adjustments, but that wasn’t the case. Neither team really changed what they were doing, scheme-wise. The Falcons just dominated both lines of scrimmage in the second half.

Having Greg Hardy and likely Randy Gregory back for Week 5 is going to help this team in ways no one can fathom right now. The pass rush is nearly non-existent. Ready for this: The Cowboys registered three quarterback hurries, two by Sean Lee, the third by Anthony Hitchens, two non pass-rushing linebackers. Tyrone Crawford didn’t even make the stat sheet. Really missed Jeremy Mincey, too. He’s such an underrated part of this defense.

Head coach Jason Garrett was feisty during his press conference. I like feisty Garrett just because it shows those who think he’s robotic how emotional he really is. Even his body language was feisty. This is one of those games that he knew would go a long way come season’s end. Also, his clock management at the end of the first half was curious. No need for a timeout with the ball on the 1-yard line. That gave Atlanta enough time to drive for a field goal before intermission.

That’s by leaps and bounds the best ballgame I’ve seen Nick Hayden play. Was superb in the first half, then the back-to-back batted balls in the second. Finished with five solo tackles, one for loss. Fans have complained a lot about him over the last three years, but he plays his you-know-what off. Made one tackle in the second quarter like 14 yards downfield.

The difference in the game was third downs, with the Falcons converting 9-of-14, some so ridiculously easy it was painful to watch, while the Cowboys went 1-of-7, including that fourth down at the end.

CRYSTAL BALL

The Saints are 0-3, and there’s no way of knowing whether Drew Brees plays or not. The run has been over for some time in New Orleans, and for whatever reason, few in the media wanted to acknowledge that. This will be a third losing season in four years. The Cowboys are hurting with injuries and such, but they should be able to open up the offense a little more. Not going to be easy, though.

COWBOYS 27, SAINTS 23.



Jeff Sullivan is the author of “America’s Team: The Official History of the Dallas Cowboys.” Follow him on Twitter, @SullyBaldHead, or email comments to jsullivan@dallascowboys.net.



28

INSIDE THE



87

RANDLE



Joseph Randle's day certainly got off to a promising start, as on his first three carries alone he rushed for 85 yards with one touchdown, already surpassing his career single-game high of 69 yards. He eventually finished the first quarter with 91 yards on nine attempts and two scores. That marked the first time a Cowboys player had rushed for at least 85 yards and scored at least two touchdowns in the first frame since Emmitt Smith did so on Sept. 22, 1991 at Phoenix. But over the rest of the day, Randle actually lost 4 yards on five attempts to finish with 87 yards, failing to crack the century mark. He's currently averaging 4.2 yards per carry and is on pace to top 1,000 yards.

17%

Considering that they ran 49 plays and finished with 347 yards of offense, the fact that Dallas only had six third downs was somewhat surprising. Unfortunately, they converted only one of those for a 17 percent success rate. They are now at only a 29 percent conversion rate for the season. Conversely, the Falcons were good on 64 percent of their third downs, 9-of-14. The Cowboys are now allowing opponents to move the chains 51.4 percent of the time on third downs.



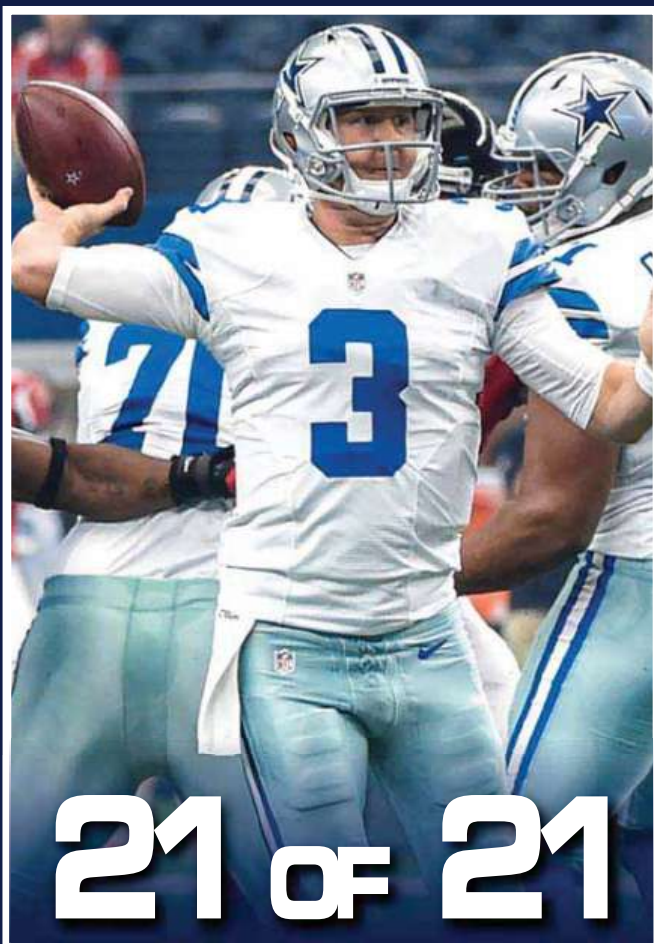
"(The Falcons) made adjustments, and they started pressuring us a little more. They shot the gaps and kept us behind the chains in down and distance. We weren't able to overcome it."

- Jason Witten



39

NUMBERS



21 of 21

While he may not have lit up the highlight reels, Brandon Weeden was for the most part efficient against Atlanta. He opened the game by completing his first nine passes, which combined with his 7-for-7 effort at Philadelphia the week before, and a 5-for-5 finish to the 2014 season gave him a streak of 21 consecutive passes completed, which set a new Cowboys record. He finished the game with an 84.6 completion percentage and 232 yards passing, although he failed to record a touchdown throw and had one costly interception.

50

This game marked the Cowboys' 50th regular-season contest held at AT&T Stadium since the building opened in 2009. With the loss, they are now 27-23 in those outings. By comparison, in the team's first 50 regular-season games at the Cotton Bowl, Dallas went 21-26-3, while in the Cowboys' first 50 at Texas Stadium, they were 41-9.

"We can't have any excuses for how we did out there. We just didn't do our job."

- Tyrone Crawford

400

Sean Lee continued his stand-out play from the weak-side linebacker position, as he once again led the Cowboys in tackles, totaling a game-high 10 takedowns, which included seven solo. This came despite missing some action in the third quarter after suffering a cut to his lip. In addition to him recording a sack of Matt Ryan on a first-quarter blitz, his first in the NFL, the game also saw Lee surpass 400 tackles for his career.

GRADING THE GAME



C+

QUARTERBACKS

Brandon Weeden wasn't bad. He completed 85 percent for 232 yards and only made one mistake. That said, the Cowboys' lack of a real downfield passing threat wasn't anywhere near good enough.



C

DEFENSIVE LINE

It's hard to even grade these guys, considering the multitude of players sitting out. Without Jeremy Mincey, Randy Gregory and Greg Hardy, the Cowboys allowed 5 yards per carry and couldn't generate any pressure.



B-

RUNNING BACKS

The Cowboys couldn't have started better. They had 131 rushing yards and three rushing touchdowns at halftime. As good as that was, the second half was equally as bad. Dallas ran for minus-4 yards.



B-

LINEBACKERS

The only sack of the day came from Sean Lee – the first of his career. Whereas it seemed like the linebackers created plays in Philadelphia, they merely reacted to them against Atlanta.



F

WIDE RECEIVERS

Cole Beasley caught four balls for 49 yards ... and was the only Cowboys wideout to record a catch. It's obvious Dallas is missing Dez Bryant, but the no-show by Terance Williams won't cut it.



B-

SECONDARY

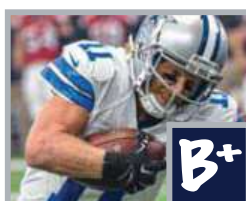
Credit to the secondary for limiting Julio Jones in the first half, but it couldn't hold up over four quarters. Jones made plays from every spot in the formation, including the game-clinching touchdown from the slot.



B+

TIGHT ENDS

Gutsy effort from Jason Witten to record six catches for 65 yards despite a multitude of injuries. Would have been nice to see Gavin Escobar involved in the game plan – another no-show.



B+

SPECIAL TEAMS

Chris Jones downed three punts inside the 20, and Cole Beasley finally found a little running room as the punt returner. On the whole, though, special teams didn't have a big chance to impact the game.



B

OFFENSIVE LINE

The first half was an absolutely dominating performance, as Dallas averaged 8 yards per carry. Atlanta buckled down, however, and that running room was gone. Weeden was also sacked twice.

Although listed as a running back, Lance Dunbar has become one of the Cowboys' top receivers this season. He caught the ball on all 10 of his targets from Brandon Weeden in this game to finish with 100 yards, which led the team. This marks the second contest this year that Dunbar has topped Dallas in receiving after totaling 70 yards in the season-opening victory against the Giants, and he's now ranked first on the Cowboys in receiving yards (215) and is tied for first in catches (21). Dunbar has also already set a career high for catches in a season and is just two yards away from topping his personal best in receiving yards.



10



39
FALCONS
3-0



28
COWBOYS
2-1

Scoring

	1	2	3	4	F
Atlanta Falcons	7	10	8	14	39
Dallas Cowboys	14	14	0	0	28

1ST QUARTER

Cowboys: 13:52 – Randle 37 yd run (Bailey kick)

Cowboys: 7:07 – Randle 1 yd run (Bailey kick)

Falcons: 3:00 – Freeman 3 yd run (Bryant kick)

ATL DAL

0 7

0 14

7 14

2ND QUARTER

Cowboys: 7:25 – McFadden 2 yd run (Bailey kick)

Falcons: 2:18 – Freeman 2 yd run (Bryant kick)

Cowboys: 0:40 – Randle 1 yd run (Bailey kick)

Falcons: 0:00 – Bryant 32 yd field goal

7 21

14 21

14 28

17 28

3RD QUARTER

Falcons: 7:05 – Jones 45 yd pass from Ryan
(Toilolo pass from Ryan)

25 28

4TH QUARTER

Falcons: 11:25 – Freeman 7 yd run (Bryant kick)

Falcons: 3:04 – Jones 2 yd pass from Ryan (Bryant kick)

32 28

39 28

COWBOYS LEADERS

Passing: Weeden - 232 YDS, 0 TD, 1 INT

Rushing: Randle - 14 CAR, 87 YDS, 3 TD

Receiving: Dunbar - 10 REC, 100 YDS, 0 TD

Defense: Lee - 10 TKLS (7 SOLO), 1 SACK

SCOUT'S TAKE



Thought the Falcons had a nice plan in the way that they attacked the Cowboys' defensive ends. They were able to run the toss sweeps early with Devonta Freeman, which then opened up some opportunities inside. This is where the defense missed a guy like Jeremy Mincey, who can control the point of attack with his power. Jack Crawford and Ryan Russell were just not stout

enough to help the defense, especially when the ball went to the edge. And while fans might dislike **NICK HAYDEN** as a player, out of all the Cowboys' defensive linemen, he came to play. His five tackles and two tipped passes are the reason why defensive coordinator Rod Marinelli loves having him around. He is not the prettiest or most technique-sound, but he does give you everything he has.

– Bryan Broadus

fan reaction



Nick Simpson The O, D and everyone else just fell apart after that INT by Weeden. Sucks to lose and have haters coming on here, but at least we're still first in the east. One game doesn't define your season. But one thing for sure, whoever is inspiring the backups to step up and help the team is doing a heck of a job. Now all you can do is shake it off, tip your hat to Atlanta and get ready for New Orleans

Sonny Garcia Always proud of my Dallas Cowboys...even when really banged up on both sides of the ball! Go Cowboys!!

Sheryl Stephens Cowboys Nation all the time, no matter what they actually did. Pretty darn good for not having Dez or Romo DCB4L BABY

Hector Villa Greg Hardy, Randy Gregory, Dez Bryant, Tony Romo and Rolando McClain. When we get them back, Cowboys will be that much more of a threat!

Rose Glidden We're still in first place! Cowboys just need to regroup and get ready for the Saints next week! Looks like they won't have Drew Brees again next week, so Cowboys take advantage of it! Let's go Cowboys!

Juan Puentes That's ok, it's only the first game for Weeden. He still has a ways to go, we'll be fine. GO DALLAS COWBOYS!!!

Bob C McGehee Sr. Kudos to my team, the Dallas Cowboys. Heartfelt loss, but there's next week! Can't feel content with just "staying afloat" until Romo's return! Weeden needs to put some "W's" in the win column until Romo's return, so he doesn't have to play catch up to keep the Cowboys in contention to make the playoffs. Maybe Weeden's not the answer as QB? Decision Time?

Anna Bell Just one game. You got this. Go Cowboys!

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NO PRESSURE

By Mickey Spagnola

THE COWBOYS ARE UNABLE TO SLOW DOWN ATLANTA IN A 39-28 LOSS.

ARLINGTON, Texas – When the Cowboys this Sunday evening slip into the Big Easy, which is a significant misnomer since nothing is *easy* in New Orleans at night, this is what they will know for sure.

They still will be without Tony Romo. They still will be without Dez Bryant. They know for sure they still will be without the four-game suspended Greg Hardy and Rolando McClain. They will still likely be missing Randy Gregory at least one more game.

And this will be what they dearly hope: They don't have to score 40 points to defeat the winless New Orleans Saints (0-3).

Seriously, right?

Look, that's how many points the Cowboys would have needed to score this past Sunday to defeat the Atlanta Falcons here at AT&T Stadium. That's right, four-zero.

And just in case you are wondering, since the start of the century, encompassing 242 previous games going into Sunday's against the Falcons, the Cowboys had scored 40 or more points just eight times. Eight. That averages out to like once every 30.25 games. And if not for last season, when they scored at least 40 points in three contests, including the final two, the probability of scoring 40 escalates to significantly higher odds.

A reasonable man would have thought scoring 28 against the Falcons would have been plenty, especially after going up to Philadelphia the week before and holding the Eagles to just 10 points. What more could you have asked from backup quarterback Brandon Weeden starting in place of Romo as well as a host of receivers trying to fill in for the missing Bryant.

OK, the Cowboys scored all those points in the first half and did nothing in the second. I get it. But after leading 28-14 with 40 seconds left before halftime – with seven of those made easier after a Weeden interception was returned to the Cowboys' 23-yard line – the roof caved in.

The Cowboys allowed the Falcons to score 25 consecutive points for their nearly runaway 39-28 victory, the 39 the most points the Cowboys have yielded in the past 22 games, going back to that 45-28 beat-down in Chicago on Dec. 9, 2013.

"It's definitely frustrating anytime you lose a game, just frustrating," Cowboys cornerback Morris Claiborne said. "I thought we'd keep going the way we were going."

So did the majority of the 90,345 people at AT&T Stadium. But the Atlanta offensive onslaught began with :40 left in the first half after the Cowboys took a 28-14 lead on Joseph Randle's third rushing touchdown of the game and 92nd rushing yard, if you can believe that.

From that point on, however, the Falcons scored on four of their next five possessions, starting with a half-ending 32-yard

field goal. The 66-yard drive was a precursor of things to come, because after that, the Falcons went punt, touchdown, touchdown, touchdown, before taking a knee on the Cowboys defense in the end.

What happened? How did the damn break? Remember, the Cowboys were playing short on the defensive front with Jeremy Mincey and Gregory inactive and having placed Terrell McClain on injured reserve. That meant defensive tackle Jack Crawford started at right defensive end, and Davon Coleman and Ken Bishop were the rotating-in defensive tackles. That meant fifth-round draft choice Ryan Russell was the only backup defensive end active, playing his first NFL game.

So, with still no Hardy or Gregory, then no Mincey (concussion), the Cowboys only sacked Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan once, and that belonged to Lee on a blitz. The Cowboys' defensive ends, starter DeMarcus Lawrence included, finished the game with no sacks, no quarterback pressures and just three tackles.

That gave Ryan (24 of 36, 285 yards) all day in the pocket. And did we ever find out that Julio was down by the ball yard. Atlanta receiver Julio Jones hauled in nine second-half passes for 137 yards and two touchdowns, including a 45-yarder that cut the lead with the two-point conversion to 28-25 midway through the third quarter.

And on top of that, the Cowboys run defense started suffering leakage. Second-year Falcons running back Devonta Freeman, starting in place of rookie Tevin Coleman, galloped 30 times for 141 yards and three rushing touchdowns – 89 of those yards in the second half.

Bad combination: Can't stop the run and can't put pressure on the quarterback, which meant headaches for the secondary trying to contain Jones, who now has three consecutive 100-yard receiving games to start the season, catching 12 for 164 against the Cowboys.

"Not much changed," Cowboys cornerback Brandon Carr said when asked why the second half was so different from the first. "The momentum (changed)."

For sure the Saints will go to school on how the Falcons attacked Dallas that second half. Fortunately for the Cowboys, they might not have to face Drew Brees, and the Saints certainly don't have a Julio Jones, although they do have Brandin Cooks, who leads New Orleans with 190 receiving yards on 16 catches.

Regardless, this is a must: The Cowboys have to play significantly better against the Saints' running game. And they had better pressure the quarterback.

Otherwise, on a Sunday night in New Orleans, where strange things are known to occur, 28 won't be enough ... again.



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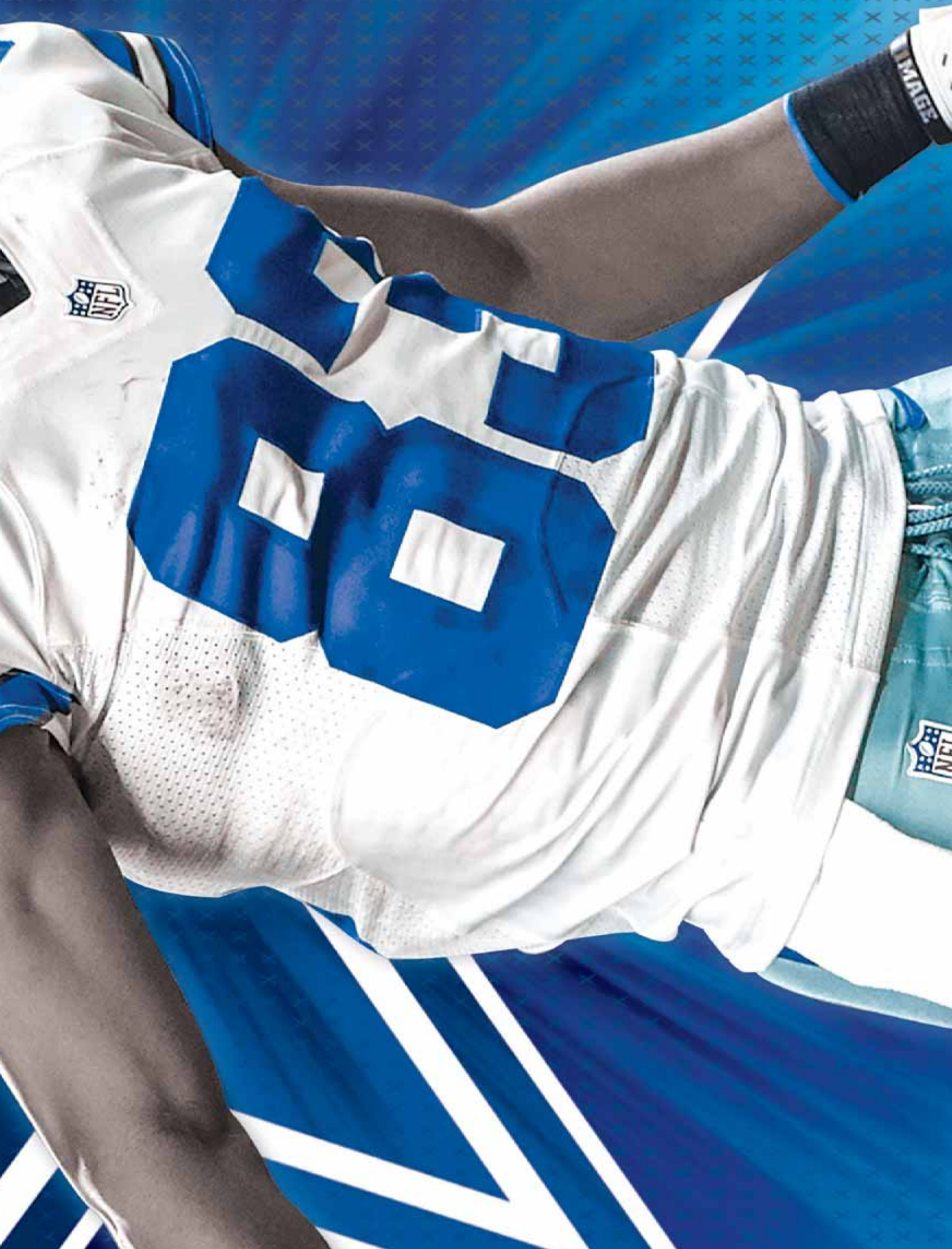
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HIS TIME

AFTER A LONG ROAD OF UPS AND DOWNS, BRANDON WEEDEN GETS HIS CHANCE TO TAKE THE REINS AS THE COWBOYS' STARTING QUARTERBACK.

Not even two months removed from his 18th birthday, Brandon Weeden believed his football career was finished. He knew this, his family knew, his coaches and teammates knew. The college recruiters, who otherwise would have been ringing his phone daily and making frequent visits to Edmond, Okla., also knew, and thus stayed away.

Still, just because a moment is inevitable doesn't make it any less emotional.

Weeden sat in the visitors' locker room of then-Lewis Field on the campus of Oklahoma State, his team having just lost in the state semifinals, and cried. And not one of those high school, "I'm too cool for school and most certainly too cool for crying" situations, where one fights back the tears with every fiber of his being. No, Weeden cried and cried, in his own words, "like a baby. I just kept crying for 10 minutes. I distinctly remember to this very day thinking this will be the last time I take off shoulder pads. I was beat up by it. I had grown to love it. Playing football was so much fun for me, and I was never going to have a chance to do it again."

It would be nearly nine years before Weeden would start another football game, which is all the more unfathomable considering he only started 15 games at quarterback previous to that state semifinal contest in

2001. Like in his whole life to that point. We're talking Pop Warner, middle school, high school, the works.

Weeden was always a baseball player. He played a single football season before his junior year of high school, that being seventh grade when he rode the bench as an undersized backup quarterback, "I was like a bobblehead, just too small. I shouldn't have even been out there."

Certainly, we aren't taking a leap of faith in saying that Weeden is the only person in the history of this world to have started 15 games at quarterback the first 26 years of his life and eventually play in the NFL. And now he's the starting quarterback of the Dallas Cowboys. At least for the next two months or so he is with Tony Romo having suffered a fractured collarbone in Week 2 against Philadelphia.

The Super Bowl aspirations, the hopes and dreams of America's Team now rest upon the right arm of the once can't-miss flame-thrower destined to play alongside Derek Jeter.

And while no one is thrilled with losing one of the league's premier signal-callers, the organization has rallied around Weeden, putting their full confidence in his abilities to produce on the field and lead off it, with owner Jerry Jones saying, "You won't see a more gifted

IS NOW

By Jeff Sullivan



passer. And he has put the time in. My dream is that he steps in here and really, really has a successful run of it."

A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

Weeden grew up in Edmond, a city of nearly 90,000 just outside of Oklahoma City, as the oldest of three brothers, each four years apart, the eldest two obsessed with anything and everything involving sports – baseball, basketball, fishing, BMX bikes, dirt bikes and, well, more baseball. His parents, Robbie and Shari, were high school sweethearts and are still happily married. It was in many ways the All-American childhood.

"We were, I guess are, the normal family. Middle income, very blessed, close-knit growing up," Weeden said. "Still to this day, nothing out of the ordinary. The average middle-of-the-road family."

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While most young boys in Oklahoma, anywhere in the South really, grow up wanting to play college football, Weeden was always too small, so baseball became his game of choice. And despite his lack of growth early on, he was such a talent that he usually played with older age groups. When he was 13, his select team, the Oklahoma Sooners, played 121 games and traveled the country.

"We only lost eight, and won a couple of national championships along the way," Weeden said. "I played second base, and would come in and pitch knuckleballs and a curveball. I was a few years away from catching up, size-wise, but to this day, those are some of my closest friends.

"We played in Las Vegas, Florida, Ohio, here in Texas. We always go back to those memories. We became best friends and our parents became best friends. We were literally together every day that year."

As a high school freshman at Edmond Santa Fe, Weeden was 5 feet, 7 inches and 130 pounds. The growth spurt started soon thereafter, and when his junior year began, he was 6 feet, 3 inches and maybe, after a lengthy swim and toting some rocks, 175 pounds. His physical education teacher, also the football coach, talked him into coming out for the team and he split time at quarterback.

"We went 2-8 and were just terrible," said Weeden, who has never played a position on a football field besides quarterback. "I had no idea what I was doing. There was a lot of stuff on the move, bootlegs, throwing on the run. More times than not, I was just throwing the ball up and hoping for the best, which didn't prove hugely successful."

His senior campaign, though, brought the arrival of a new head coach, Dan Cocannouer. From the first practice, when he saw Weeden launching balls 65 yards downfield, he knew this wasn't the typical high school quarterback who was more or less hoping to manage the game.

"I'm just watching him, 6-4, 6-5, and everyone was talking about what a heck of a baseball player he was. Pro scouts were coming to watch him," said Cocannouer, now the head coach at Southwestern Oklahoma State. "But after just a few football games that year, he was really starting to look the part. You just had this feeling he could be something special.

"He could already throw a football so ridiculously hard, but it took time to teach him how to play quarterback. It was a simple offense we implemented, and he caught on pretty quick. I do remember the first pass of the season was an interception, but there weren't many more thereafter."

The offense was run out of the shotgun, spread formation, most games a 50-50 balance of running and passing, and Weeden thrived, seemingly more so with each passing week. He threw for 2,863 yards, the second-most in the state, and 25 touchdowns against just 10 interceptions to earn district MVP and All-State honors. The team went 8-2 and advanced to the playoffs for the first time in school history. A few wins later, they were playing in the state semifinals on the campus of Oklahoma State.



"We made a good run at it, but it was kind of crazy looking back. Even with that success, I was still focused on baseball. That was always my deal," said Weeden, who signed a baseball scholarship with OSU during the football season. "I was enjoying football more and more, and if I ended up going to Oklahoma State, I would have contemplated walking on the football team and doing both sports."

Then-OSU offensive coordinator Mike Gundy was quite interested in Weeden doing just that, and spoke with Cocannouer about the possibility on several occasions. Both coaches knew how raw Weeden was, which was to be expected with his lack of experience, but by the latter third of his senior season, the potential was being seen more and more. He was learning how to play the position, rather than just chucking the ball around the field.

"Brandon just needed to learn touch," Cocannouer said. "Screen passes early on could be quite entertaining. Well, except for the kid he was throwing the ball to who would end up with a few sprained fingers. Around Week 8, I turned to an assistant coach on the sideline in the midst of the game and said, 'He understands how to play quarterback now. This is going to be fun.' And, it was.

"Everyone is watching you. I think once he realized that, he kind of woke up and understood what it means to play quarterback. Still, though, the leadership on many levels was already there because of his competitiveness. Baseball, basketball, golf, if he's playing a sport, he wants to win as badly as anyone I've ever been around. You can't teach that. It's engrained within.

"Now, off the field, Brandon is a completely different kid. In the hallways, I had him for a class, and he's just a mellow, laid-back person. When that competitiveness takes over, though, watch out."

After a stellar senior campaign on the diamond (5-1, nine saves, 1.39 ERA), Weeden was selected as the top pick of the New York Yankees in the second round of the 2002 Major League Baseball Draft. He was informed of this lifelong dream – he grew up a huge Yankees fan – while sitting on a beach in Mexico during his senior trip. The phone rang and it was legendary owner George Steinbrenner. Weeden was headed to the minor leagues as a pitcher. Yet, while his sights were set on taking the mound at Yankee Stadium, there were still thoughts of football in the back of his mind.

"I told my parents the day I signed with the Yankees, if I don't make it in baseball, I want to go back to school and get an education first and foremost, but I also want to give football a shot," Weeden said. "Now remember, I'm 18, 19 years old at the time thinking I'm going to be playing along side Derek Jeter in three years, not having any idea what I was getting myself into."

FINDING HIS TRUE LOVE

The professional baseball career, which began after Weeden signed a \$565,000 bonus, couldn't have started any better, as he posted back-to-back stellar campaigns in the lower levels of the minor leagues in 2002-03. He was touted among the organization's top prospects, but already his fastball was starting to lose a few miles per hour from the 96, 97 it was touching during the final weeks of his high school career.

Then on Dec. 13, 2003, Weeden's world changed dramatically as he was traded to the Los Angeles Dodgers with several other prospects for All-Star pitcher Kevin Brown. For a multitude of reasons, he would never be the same, and in his next two seasons of Class-A ball, he struggled in all facets.

His shoulder was bothering him more and more, especially with curveballs, and honestly, looking back, minor league baseball wasn't exactly what he had envisioned.

"My shoulder started feeling some wear and tear at that point," Weeden said. "My velocity dropped, and I had always dominated, I was always one of the better players. That was my first battle with real adversity, and I think it kind of ate at me. I was young and didn't really know how to handle it.

"Then my fourth year, my arm is really bothering me. I'm fighting through it, but we're playing in front of 30 people a night for \$1,200 a month before taxes and eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches on 16-hour bus rides. It was an absolute grind. It kind of took the fun out of it. You play 140 games and no one cares whether you win or lose. It's all about progressing to the big leagues, and I hated that. I'm more of a team guy. I like being part of a team when we're all fighting for the same thing."



MIKE JAMES/FOUR SEAM IMAGES VIA AP IMAGES



Blackmon and Weeden

Through this entire stretch, 2002-06, Weeden would return to his high school within days of the baseball season ending and coach the Edmond Santa Fe quarterbacks. His younger brother was the starting passer at one point and the two would play catch for hours.

"I was honestly throwing the football more in the offseason than a baseball, so I never left the game entirely," Weeden said. "I was always around it a little bit."

More and more, Cocannouer could see that his former star quarterback was talking less and less about baseball and more and more about football. And after a fifth and final season in the minors, Weeden decided enough was enough. His friends and family, his then-girlfriend and now wife, Melanie, all suggested attending Central Oklahoma, a Division II program in his hometown.

But, Weeden wasn't interested. Cocannouer made a phone call to Gundy, by then the head coach at Oklahoma State, and Weeden was invited to join the team as a walk-on, with the understanding that he would redshirt his first year.

"A lot of people asked why I didn't go to a smaller school, but I wanted to go to a good school, challenge myself and if it didn't work out, I would focus on school, no big deal. That was my mindset going in," Weeden said. "That first year, we had a nice little scout team offense [with Justin Blackmon at wide receiver], and we picked the varsity defense apart. I fell in love again, but it definitely took a year to knock that rust off. Even though I was throwing the football

around during the offseason, it's completely different throwing routes into coverage with pads and a helmet on, and the speed, so there was an adjustment period."

For the most part, his first two seasons with the collegiate Cowboys saw limited action, as after redshirting, Weeden was then third-string on the depth chart. His first real chance came as a sophomore in 2009, when he entered the game at halftime against Colorado, his team trailing by nine points. Weeden threw for 168 yards and two scores and led OSU to victory. Following the game, when asked why Weeden wasn't at least the backup behind all-conference selection Zac Robinson, Gundy said that Weeden didn't practice well and often looked bored.

In the midst of a 30-minute interview last week at Valley Ranch, when the subject was broached, literally after just two words of the question were spoken, Weeden started nodding his head and said, "I know exactly what you're going to ask."

Sure enough, he was correct, the topic was Gundy's quote.

"No, I didn't like it at the time. It kind of fired me up at the time, but I respect Coach Gundy, so I never brought attention to it," Weeden said. "I think it was just my personality. I'm such a laid-back guy. I kind of have that baseball mentality of it's a long season, have to stay even-keeled, can't get too excited or too low."

"I honestly thought I proved that whenever I came in during scrimmages. ... I think after that Colorado second half he realized I

have some fire. I have it in me. I'm a competitive son of a gun. I wasn't really pumped up about that statement, I certainly didn't agree with it, but in retrospect, I guess that's my personality. I respect the man, so I really can't say anything more about the quote."

In 2010, as a junior, Weeden was given the starting job. And to say he excelled would be an understatement, as he threw for 4,277 passing yards and 34 touchdowns in leading OSU to 11 wins. His offensive coordinator that season, Gunter Brewer, had been an assistant since Weeden arrived on campus four years previous.

"I remember when he first hit town, this former high baseball pick. You could immediately see his love of football. I can still see him in those first few quarterback meetings, spitting his sunflower seeds," said Brewer, now the offensive coordinator at North Carolina. "Even though he was older, married with a dog and driving a BMW, he fit in with his teammates immediately, which was important. It's tough not to like him. And his arm strength was competitive immediately. I guess his arm issues with baseball were more with curveballs because, wow, this guy could throw a football through a car wash and it wouldn't get wet.

"I remember that Colorado game, we were going to ease him into the game, but after those first few throws, it was obvious this kid was a gamer, and he just kept growing after that," Brewer said. "No one was expecting him to put up those numbers (in 2010) because, well, those numbers had never been done before."

And while it wasn't a problem, Weeden threw the football more like a baseball, not much arc, kind of a frozen rope laser, and more times than not, it worked out just fine. Again, screen passes could be adventurous, with Brewer calling them double plays because Weeden's arm slot would resemble a shortstop or second baseman side-arming the ball toward the bag. In time, the two worked on lifting Weeden's elbow on those throws, but for the most part, because of his success, Brewer didn't want to revamp his motion.

"He was almost like an artist in how he could deliver the ball to the receiver from different levels, and he would put the ball in places no one else could," Brewer said. "We changed his motion a bit, but Terry Bradshaw used to cup the ball, it's not like everyone needs to have the same throwing slot. Brandon never really threw a bad ball, even if there wasn't a lot of arc."

Said Weeden, "I didn't really change my motion, maybe a little tweak because everything's faster, the pass rush, you have to speed it up. When I first arrived at OSU, my throwing motion was longer just because the throwing motion of a baseball is longer. That was the biggest adjustment from a mechanical standpoint. I think I throw the same now as my senior year at Oklahoma State, but I know what he was saying. There was a process there."

As a senior, Weeden somehow bettered his numbers, totaling 4,727 passing yards and 37 touchdowns, as Oklahoma State went 12-1 and beat Andrew Luck, Robert Griffin III and Ryan Tannehill along the way. They finished the season ranked third in the country.

There was much debate on where Weeden would be taken in the 2012 NFL Draft. Obviously, it's not every year a 28-year-old quarterback is eligible to be selected. He ended up becoming the oldest first-round pick in the draft's history, going 22nd overall to the Cleveland Browns.

EMBRACING THE MOMENT

History judges professional athletes by statistics and wins and losses. As time passes, the stories and circumstances behind the numbers are rarely remembered. Such is the case of Weeden's rookie campaign with the Browns in 2012. Cleveland finished 5-11, but five of their first eight defeats were by seven or fewer points. In each of those games, there was a dropped touchdown pass. For the season, the Browns led the league in dropped passes in the red zone and the end zone.

"I really don't think he was given a fair shot," Brewer said. "There were a lot of drops, and a whole lot of drops in the end zone. I've never seen anything like that. There wasn't great protection, either. Cleveland is Cleveland. I mean, you need the groceries to cook the meal."

This is not to completely absolve Weeden, who started 15 games and threw for 3,385 yards, 14 touchdowns and 17 interceptions. He was far from perfect, but he was also a rookie. Some factored in his age, as if he should be more developed than a 22-year-old, but the truth is, perhaps no quarterback has ever entered the league having taken fewer career snaps. And he had never, as in ever, ever, taken a snap under center before his rookie season.



AP PHOTO/DUANE BURLINSON

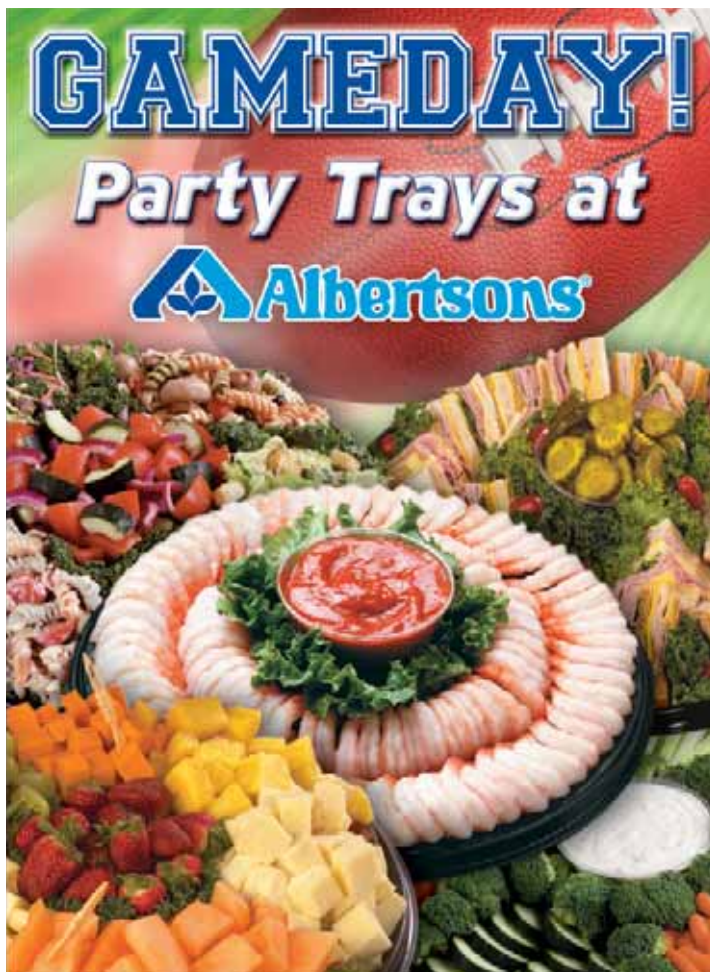
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"It was up and down. There were a lot of those throws I would like to have back," Weeden said. "There were a lot of games I felt like I made some throws to give us a chance to win. The hard part as a quarterback is not winning games and there's a drop. But you're not exactly killing it, either, so it's hard to get mad at a wide receiver. I was fully aware of what was going on.

"Honestly, I was just trying to focus on myself. I went from being in the shotgun every snap in college, and high school for that matter, to being under center more than any quarterback in the league as a rookie. I was still learning the West Coast system, which is challenging, verbally and all that.

"Did I play great? Absolutely not. Were there some things to build on? Absolutely, there were, but it's a hard position and when you're a younger player, you need some things to go right for you, and those things just didn't go right for me. It is what it is."

His quarterbacks coach that first season with Cleveland, Mark Whipple, now the head coach at the University of Massachusetts, spoke last week about the dropped passes and the opportunities to win some of those games where Weeden did everything in his control, made the plays, threw the passes in the pressure spots.

"He can make those throws and in pressure situations," Whipple told *USA Today*. "That was why I always believed in the kid. If he gets hit in the pocket, he's not going to flinch. And he can deliver a firm, catchable ball.

"I think he showed what he can do in the Philly game with the numbers. He can make all the throws. He's a talented guy and a really good person. I think he'll do fine."

Following an ownership change, the Browns overhauled their entire front office and coaching staff prior to the 2013 season. That meant Weeden was now dealing with his sixth offensive coordinator, Norv Turner, in as many years, dating back to Oklahoma State. He shared the duties with two other quarterbacks, and didn't play terribly, posting nine touchdown passes and nine picks, but it was clear the Browns were moving on. He was released in March 2014, less than two years after being the team's first-round selection.

Shortly thereafter, the Cowboys inked Weeden to be Romo's backup. The move wasn't widely hailed, some feeling that while Weeden has a big-time arm, he lacks the mobility and quick release to succeed in the NFL.

He has been quite impressive, though, in the two games in which he's replaced Romo following an injury to the starter. Against Washington on Oct. 27, 2014, he went 4-of-6 for 69 yards, which included a touchdown pass. And in Week 2 of this year, at Philadelphia, he completed 7-of-7 attempts for 73 yards, highlighted by a beautiful scoring toss to Terrance Williams.

However, in his lone start for the Cowboys, on Nov. 2, 2014 against Arizona, Weeden struggled. With the Cardinals, then the No. 1-ranked defense in the league, having the week to prepare, he threw for just 183 yards and two picks.

Still, there are many positives, reasons to be optimistic, as for the first time in his career, Weeden has spent consecutive seasons with the same offensive coordinator, Scott Linehan. And his quarterbacks coach, Wade Wilson, said he was the most improved player he saw during the offseason.

"Better command of our offense, what's expected of him," Wilson said of the difference. "It's coming out here and executing the plays, not stammering in the huddle. You have to have total command, and he came in and really worked hard this offseason. Also, it's his second year in a row in Scott's offense, and he's never had that previously, so he has a better idea of what's expected of him.

"He's played extremely well when he's come off the bench, last year and this year, and now he just needs to go out and do that as the starter," Wilson said. "So it's just dealing with everything outside of being a backup player. You have to do it on a consistent basis now. You come off the bench and make a few plays, win the game, and everything is great. Now you are the starter for an extended period of time. You have to prove yourself in that capacity. There's pressure to perform."

The Cowboys coaching staff has preached taking care of the ball, not only for Weeden, but as a team philosophy in general. And while they want Weeden to be aggressive and use his arm to make the big play, they also don't want him forcing the ball, which has been a problem in the past.

Weeden sometimes looks downfield and thinks his arm can squeeze the ball into any coverage. While his touchdown pass was a thing of beauty against Philly, the play most talked about last week among teammates and coaches was a check down to Lance Dunbar on third down. It wasn't enough to move the chains, but it was a smart decision, one that Romo has mastered over time.

Another positive for Weeden is that he has taken more first-team snaps than just about any backup in the league since coming to Dal-



las, from Organized Team Activities and minicamps in 2014, to Wednesday practices in all but two weeks of last season. Also in training camp and the preseason of this year, Weeden saw a ton of reps as Romo continued to rest his back.

And Garrett, who spent his 16-year playing career as a backup, seeing just nine starts behind Troy Aikman, has made it crystal clear that he doesn't want Weeden trying to impersonate Romo.

"Brandon will not play exactly like Tony, and we don't want him to play exactly like Tony plays," Garrett said. "We want Brandon to play how Brandon plays. We have a system of football that we believe in, and we're confident he can run it for us."

Of course, this isn't a one-game fill-in like last year. Romo is out for at least eight weeks and maybe longer. For the Cowboys to succeed, for them to remain in first place and fulfill the lofty expectations of this season, Weeden needs to take control of the huddle and the offense. He needs to lead. He can't be walking around like the backup quarterback any longer. And no one knows that more than Weeden.

"I have to get back to that starter-type mentally. I knew last year was a spot-start and then I was going back to the sideline," he said. "My mentality is to do my part and earn the trust of the guys in this locker room. If that happens, we come together and mesh as one, we're going to be successful."

"What leaves a bad taste in a lot of people's mouths was the Arizona game. It didn't go as well as planned. The other games I've come in, though, I think we can build on that, take that confidence and use that going forward. I'm going to learn from Arizona, learn from those mistakes. That's all we can do."

"Fortunately, I have some starts in this league. I have quite a few starts to fall back on. Maybe I can be a little more vocal, not so much ideas, but let's say with the receivers, communicate more with those guys, or the backs, the line. I can communicate more because I'm not saying something maybe Tony is not saying the next week or whatever it may be. I'm not the substitute teacher."

At the same time, Weeden isn't going to try and be someone he isn't. He's a likeable guy, popular in the locker room, but he's not about to start running around being a rah-rah leader, forcing a personality that just isn't him. At this point in his life, his career, Weeden feels quite comfortable with the man, the football player, he has evolved into. And he's confident, too, quietly so. That's obvious in talking with him.



"I have to fall back on what I know and who I am," Weeden said. "I have always led by example and I'm a positive guy. I think that has always rubbed people in this locker room the right way, at least I hope it has. I like to try and get along with everyone. That's who I am. Just treat people the right way and avoid the negative. I don't do negative well, so I just block it out. I like being around positive people."

"Let's be honest, though. The only way to make this work is going out and playing well. If I go out and play well, everything else will take care of itself. I'm excited about this opportunity. I'm preparing my tail off and working my butt off to play and play well. I know it's going to be extremely challenging. Being in this spot, there's a lot of pressure. I'm not going to sug-

arcoat that. There's a lot of pressure being the backup behind a guy like Tony and being put into the fire. That's not easy."

"But if I lie in bed at night and think this is crazy and all of Dallas is freaking out about me being quarterback, you can't function like that. You can't come to work like that. So at this point, I just need to have fun, put a smile on my face, and look, I'm not going to play the perfect game. I'm going to throw incompletions and I may throw it to the wrong guy once."

"But I'm going to play hard and try to put together some good plays. You have to be a little confident. I've never been cocky, at least I hope I've never been, but I have confidence in my ability. I never lost that."

With this, Weeden pauses and looks across the locker room. The interview is winding down, although there are already several more media types waiting to talk with him, this a day after he spent nearly 20 minutes answering questions, always with a smile and refreshing honesty. And the answers aren't the scripted, "taking it one day at a time." There's genuine reflection.

Finally, after about 15 seconds or so of silence, Weeden turns and says bluntly, "I also want to show the guys in here. Guys like [Jason] Witten, I don't want to let guys like that down, who have put so much work into this. I want to be there for them. This is our season, our time."

Nearly 14 years removed from crying his heart out at the thought of having played his final football game, the greatest opportunity of his athletic career is here.

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GAME P



SAINTS' SUCCESS RESTS ON BREES' SHOULDER

BY MIKE RABUN

Early each season, sometimes before the first game can even be played, certain teams find themselves falling into the Woe Is Me Division.

A number of clubs have, indeed, been stricken of late by unfavorable news and two of them will meet Sunday evening in a sort of Hard Luck Bowl when the New Orleans Saints host the Dallas Cowboys.

Those who pay attention to the Cowboys know full well the mishaps that have befallen them, thus bringing about cause for long-term concern despite the fact that they had some victories to start the year.

For the Saints, meanwhile, the troubling news has been accompanied by unpleasant final results that threatened to derail their season before it could build any momentum at all. And heading into its game against division rival Carolina, the news went from bad to worse for New Orleans as quarterback Drew Brees was ruled out due to injury.

Medical tests revealed Brees' shoulder malady would require him to some time, although how much was still uncertain. If Brees does wind up on the shelf for at least a few weeks, it would heavily impact Sunday's encounter with the Cowboys – a game that will have a load of intrigue attached to it no matter what.

New Orleans has been synonymous with success for the past several years, even collecting a Super Bowl title in 2009. Two years ago, the Saints were a powerhouse and among their achievements that season was a 49-17 win over Dallas, a game in which New Orleans piled up the most first downs (40) in NFL history.

They led the league in offense last year, but only Atlanta gave up more yards than the Saints and that led to a 7-9 finish. One of those losses was a 38-17 setback at the hands of Dallas that served as a catalyst to the Cowboys' big season.

In the early going this year, things had not improved much on defense for the Saints. They were among the bottom 10 in both points and yards allowed.

So the consensus around New Orleans was that Brees was going to need to have a big year if the Saints hoped to reach the playoffs. New Orleans does not have a go-to running back and its offensive line has been suspect. If Brees suffers significant down time, therefore, all will likely be lost.

The Saints quarterback, of course, is not a youngster. At least in football terms. He is 36 and this is his 15th campaign in the NFL. His New Orleans career began in 2006 after five years in San Diego. And going into this season, he had never missed a start during his time with the Saints.

Brees has been counted on for steady brilliance. In 2007, for instance, he completed more passes than any other quarterback ever had in a single season. He once had a streak of six consecutive games with at least 300 passing yards, one off the all-time record.

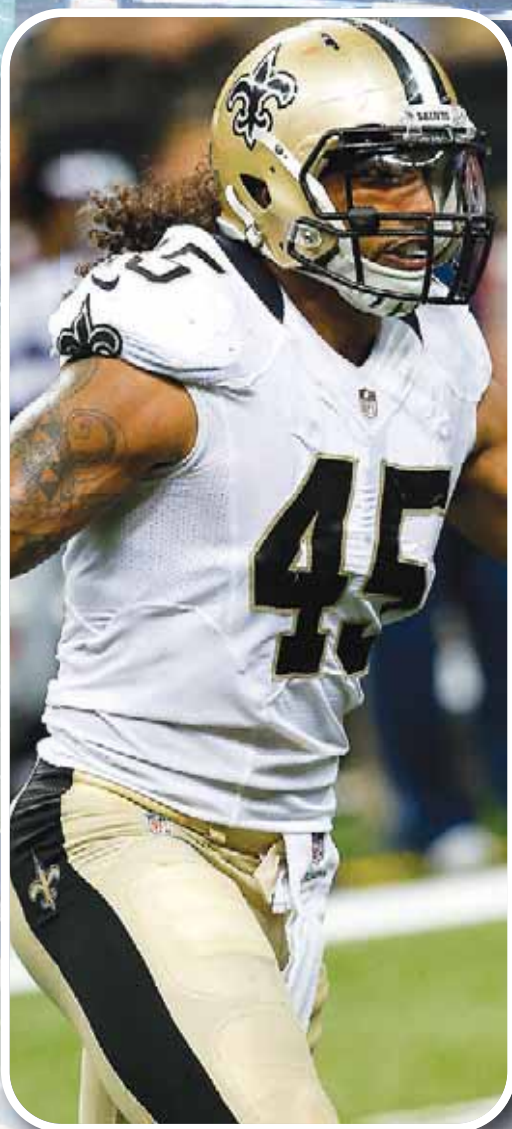
There is no such thing as a one-man team in the NFL. The Saints, however, are about as close as you can come. And if their quarterback is not able to perform up to his standards, New Orleans will have a very good chance to win the Woe Is Me Division.

BREES

REVIEW



AT



MARQUEE MATCHUP



SAINTS LB HAU'OLI KIKAHA vs. COWBOYS TE JASON WITTEN

Drafted in the second round (44th overall) in 2015 out of Washington, the Saints' strong-side linebacker faces the toughest test of his young career against the Cowboys' 10-time Pro Bowl selection. Kikaha, who was a unanimous All-American with the Huskies in 2014, was an early contender for Defensive Rookie of the Year honors. He tallied five tackles and forced an Andre Ellington fumble in the opener at Arizona and added seven tackles and a strip-sack of Tampa Bay's Jameis Winston in Week 2. Although banged up in the Week 2 victory over Philadelphia, Witten has been blocking linebackers and catching clutch passes in the NFL since Kikaha was in the sixth grade and could reach 1,000 career receptions this season, a milestone only 10 men have accomplished.



GAME PREVIEW

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

BY DAVE IVEY

The Saints' 26-19 loss to the Buccaneers in Week 2 marked their sixth straight defeat at the Superdome, their longest losing skid in New Orleans since finishing 1-15 in 1980. Head coach Sean Payton is definitely concerned, but he still believes in his guys. And he should. This ain't the "Aints" and the fans of Who Dat Nation are still pulling for their team. "We have to be able to take advantage of the crowd noise and the momentum," Payton said. "There's a sense of urgency, obviously, to get those things corrected or we'll have the same type of result."

OFFENSE



The Saints finished among the top six in the NFL in total offense for the ninth straight season in 2014, but untimely turnovers and costly penalties killed drive after drive during their 0-2 start this year. Veteran QB Drew Brees, who sustained a bruised rotator cuff in Week 2 and sat out Week 3, has averaged 345.9 passing yards in seven career starts against Dallas with 18 touchdowns and five picks. Running back Mark Ingram rushed for 145 yards and a touchdown on 14 carries in the 2013 win vs. the Cowboys. Wide receiver **MARQUES COLSTON** has posted three 100-yard games against Dallas, but second-year wideout Brandin Cooks is Brees' No. 1 target these days.

DEFENSE



After ranking 31st in total defense in 2014, coordinator Rob Ryan's unit allowed 760 yards and 57 points in the first two games this season. "We need to give the offense more chances to win," third-year safety **KENNY VACCARO** told *The Times-Picayune*. "We have to keep creating turnovers. ... If they get three, we have to get four." Defensive end Cameron Jordan, who made the Pro Bowl in 2013 with 12.5 sacks, registered one of the Saints' three sacks against the Buccaneers. Signed to a three-year deal in March to shore up the secondary, former Seahawks and Patriots cornerback Brandon Browner picked off Tony Romo in Seattle's 27-7 win against Dallas in 2012.

SPECIAL TEAMS



A seventh-round pick of the Redskins in 2014, **ZACH HOCKER** edged Dustin Hopkins for the Saints' kicking job in the preseason, but was on a short leash after missing a 42-yarder and getting an extra point blocked in the loss against Tampa Bay. In his seventh season out of SMU, Thomas Morstead entered Week 3 with the second-highest career punting average (46.9) in NFL history. DeSoto, Texas, native Marcus Murphy, a rookie running back from Missouri, moved to No. 1 on the depth chart for kickoff and punt returns with a stellar preseason. "I think he's got pretty good vision. I think he's explosive," Payton said. "He's pretty quick to accelerate."

DID YOU KNOW?

On the very first play of the Saints' first official game, John Gilliam returned the opening kickoff 94 yards for a touchdown vs. the Los Angeles Rams on Sept. 17, 1967 at Tulane Stadium. "I was a rookie, nervous and afraid," he said. "I caught it and took off running to save my hide. ... I veered to my left and I was running free. What a great feeling. What a super feeling."

OFF THE GRID

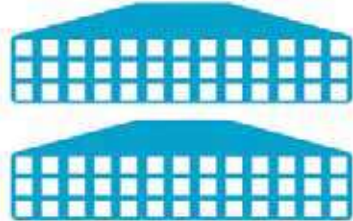
After making the opening-day roster in 2013 as an unknown, undrafted rookie free agent out of West Texas A&M, **KHIRY ROBINSON** was the Saints' second-leading rusher last year (362 yards, three touchdowns) despite missing six games in the middle of the season with a forearm injury. The third-year running back from Midland, Texas, averaged 5.2 yards per carry in the first two games of 2015, backing up Ingram while former Bills Pro Bowler C.J. Spiller recovers from a knee injury. "I try to stay out of the limelight. I don't need none of that," Robinson said. "I'm just out here to work and help the team win."



COLSTON: AP PHOTO/CHRIS O'MEARA; VACCARO & HOCKER: AP PHOTO/RICK SUTTER; ROBINSON: AP PHOTO/JOHN COGNES

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COWBOYS 2015 ROSTER

GAME PLAN

NO	NAME	POS	HT	WT	EXP	COLLEGE
3	Brandon Weeden	QB	6-4	228	4	Oklahoma State
5	Dan Bailey	K	6-0	195	5	Oklahoma State
6	Chris Jones	P	6-0	205	4	Carson Newman
11	Cole Beasley	WR	5-8	180	4	SMU
13	Lucky Whitehead	WR	5-9	180	R	Florida Atlantic
15	Devin Street	WR	6-3	200	2	Pittsburgh
16	Matt Cassel	QB	6-4	228	10	USC
17	Kellen Moore	QB	6-0	200	4	Boise State
19	Brice Butler	WR	6-3	215	2	San Diego State
20	Darren McFadden	RB	6-1	220	8	Arkansas
21	Joseph Randle	RB	6-0	210	3	Oklahoma State
23	Corey White	CB	6-1	210	4	Samford
24	Morris Claiborne	CB	5-11	192	4	LSU
25	Lance Dunbar	RB	5-8	195	4	North Texas
26	Tyler Patmon	CB	5-10	188	2	Oklahoma State
27	J.J. Wilcox	S	6-0	212	3	Georgia Southern
30	Christine Michael	RB	5-10	221	3	Texas A&M
31	Byron Jones	CB	6-0	205	R	Connecticut
38	Jeff Heath	S	6-1	212	3	Saginaw Valley State
39	Brandon Carr	CB	6-0	210	8	Grand Valley State
40	Danny McCray	S	6-1	215	6	LSU
42	Barry Church	S	6-2	218	6	Toledo
44	Tyler Clutts	FB	6-2	250	5	Fresno State
50	Sean Lee	LB	6-2	238	6	Penn State
51	Kyle Wilber	LB	6-4	245	4	Wake Forest
52	Andrew Gachkar	LB	6-2	240	5	Missouri
56	Keith Smith	LB	6-0	232	2	San Jose State
57	Damien Wilson	LB	6-1	242	R	Minnesota
58	Jack Crawford	DT	6-5	288	4	Penn State
59	Anthony Hitchens	LB	6-0	235	2	Iowa
60	Davon Coleman	DT	6-2	295	2	Arizona State
65	Ronald Leary	G	6-3	320	3	Memphis
68	Doug Free	OT	6-6	325	9	Northern Illinois
70	Zack Martin	G	6-4	315	2	Notre Dame
71	La'el Collins	OL	6-4	315	R	LSU
72	Travis Frederick	C	6-4	315	3	Wisconsin
73	Mackenzey Bernadeau	G	6-4	322	8	Bentley
77	Tyron Smith	OT	6-5	320	5	USC
78	Charlie Brown	OT	6-5	297	5	USC
82	Jason Witten	TE	6-6	263	13	Tennessee
83	Terrance Williams	WR	6-2	208	3	Baylor

NO	NAME	POS	HT	WT	EXP	COLLEGE
84	James Hanna	TE	6-4	260	4	Oklahoma
87	Geoff Swaim	TE	6-4	260	R	Texas
88	Dez Bryant	WR	6-2	220	6	Oklahoma State
89	Gavin Escobar	TE	6-6	260	3	San Diego State
90	DeMarcus Lawrence	DE	6-3	265	2	Boise State
91	L.P. Ladouceur	LS	6-5	256	11	California
92	Jeremy Mincey	DE	6-4	280	8	Florida
93	Ken Bishop	NT	6-0	300	2	Northern Illinois
94	Randy Gregory	DE	6-5	255	R	Nebraska
96	Nick Hayden	DT	6-4	303	6	Wisconsin
98	Tyrone Crawford	DT	6-4	290	4	Boise State
99	Ryan Russell	DE	6-5	275	R	Purdue



COWBOYS COACHING STAFF

JASON GARRETT: HEAD COACH

Joe Baker: Safeties

Brett Bech: Assistant Strength and Conditioning

Rich Bisaccia: Asst. Head Coach/Special Teams Coord.

Ben Bloom: Defensive Ends

Gary Brown: Running Backs

Kevin Carberry: Offensive Assistant

Marc Colombo: Offensive Assistant

Derek Dooley: Wide Receivers

Matt Eberflus: Linebackers

Jerome Henderson: Secondary

Leon Lett: Defensive Tackles

Scott Linehan: Offensive Coordinator

Steve Loney: Assistant Offensive Line

Rod Marinelli: Defensive Coordinator/Defensive Line

Keith O'Quinn: Assistant Special Teams

Frank Pollack: Offensive Line

Mike Pope: Tight Ends

Kendall Smith: Assistant Strength and Conditioning

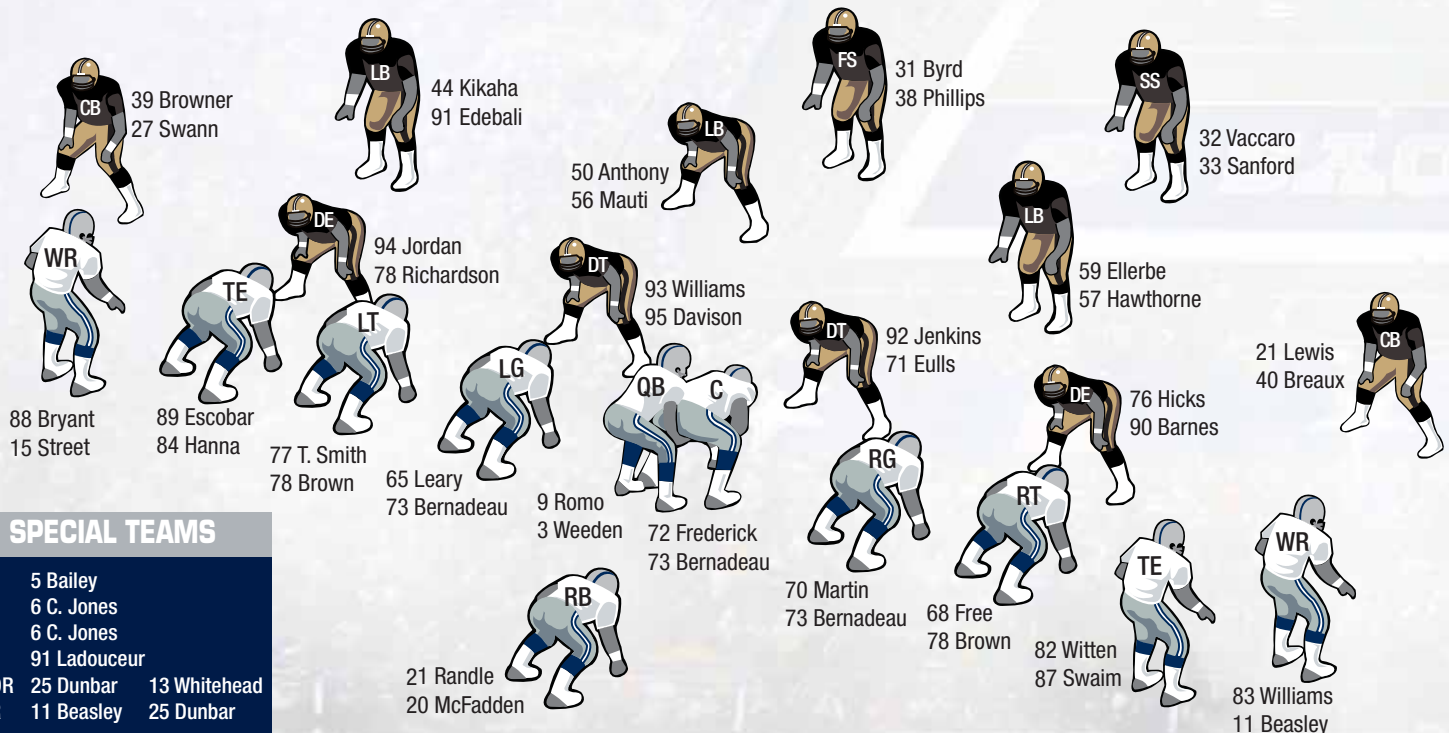
Kyle Valero: Assistant Wide Receivers

Turner West: Defensive Assistant

Wade Wilson: Quarterbacks

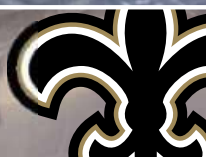
Mike Woicik: Strength and Conditioning Coordinator

PRACTICE SQUAD: LB Dakorey Johnson, RB Gus Johnson, WR Vince Mayle, DE Efe Obada, CB Deji Olatoye, C Ronald Patrick, QB Jameill Showers, WR Rodney Smith, OT Darriin Weems, OT John Wetzell



SPECIAL TEAMS

K	5 Bailey
P	6 C. Jones
H	6 C. Jones
LS	91 Ladouceur
KOR	25 Dunbar 13 Whitehead
PR	11 Beasley 25 Dunbar



NO	NAME	POS	HT	WT	EXP	COLLEGE
2	Zach Hocker	K	6-0	191	1	Arkansas
6	Thomas Morstead	P	6-4	235	7	SMU
7	Luke McCown	QB	6-4	217	12	Louisiana Tech
9	Drew Brees	QB	6-0	209	15	Purdue
10	Brandin Cooks	WR	5-10	189	2	Oregon State
12	Marques Colston	WR	6-4	225	10	Hofstra
13	Joseph Morgan	WR	6-1	184	5	Walsh
16	Brandon Coleman	WR	6-6	225	1	Rutgers
18	Garrett Grayson	QB	6-2	220	R	Colorado State
20	Brian Dixon	CB	6-0	195	2	Northwest Missouri St.
21	Keenan Lewis	CB	6-1	208	7	Oregon State
22	Mark Ingram	RB	5-9	215	5	Alabama

NO	NAME	POS	HT	WT	EXP	COLLEGE
23	Marcus Murphy	RB	5-9	195	R	Missouri
24	Kyle Wilson	CB	5-10	190	6	Boise State
27	Damian Swann	CB	6-0	189	R	Georgia
28	C.J. Spiller	RB	5-11	200	6	Clemson
29	Khiry Robinson	RB	6-0	220	3	West Texas A&M
30	Don Jones	S	5-11	205	3	Arkansas State
30	Kenny Phillips	S	6-2	217	6	Miami (Fla.)
31	Jairus Byrd	S	5-10	203	7	Oregon
32	Kenny Vaccaro	S	6-0	214	3	Texas
33	Jamarca Sanford	S	5-10	200	7	Mississippi
35	Austin Johnson	FB	6-2	240	2	Tennessee
39	Brandon Browner	CB	6-4	221	6	Oregon State
40	Delvin Breaux	CB	6-1	196	1	None
44	Hau'oli Kikaha	LB	6-3	246	R	Washington
47	Justin Drescher	LS	6-1	235	6	Colorado
50	Stephone Anthony	LB	6-3	245	R	Clemson
53	Ramon Humber	LB	5-11	232	7	North Dakota State
56	Michael Mauti	LB	6-2	243	3	Penn State
57	David Hawthorne	LB	6-0	246	8	TCU
58	Obum Gwacham	DE	6-5	246	R	Oregon State
59	Dannell Ellerbe	LB	6-1	245	7	Georgia
60	Max Unger	C	6-5	305	7	Oregon
63	Mike McGlynn	G	6-4	325	8	Pittsburgh
64	Zach Strief	OT	6-7	320	10	Northwestern
65	Senio Kelemete	C/G	6-3	300	3	Washington
68	Tim Lelito	G	6-4	315	3	Grand Valley State
71	Kaleb Eulls	DT	6-4	285	R	Mississippi State
72	Terron Armstead	OT	6-5	304	3	Arkansas-Pine Bluff
73	Jahri Evans	G	6-4	318	10	Bloomsburg
75	Andrus Peat	OT	6-7	316	R	Stanford
76	Akiem Hicks	DE	6-5	324	4	Regina
78	Bobby Richardson	DE	6-3	286	R	Indiana
82	Benjamin Watson	TE	6-3	255	12	Georgia
83	Willie Snead	WR	5-11	195	1	Ball State
89	Josh Hill	TE	6-5	250	3	Idaho State
90	Tavaris Barnes	DE	6-3	275	R	Clemson
91	Kasim Edebali	LB	6-2	253	2	Boston College
92	John Jenkins	DT	6-3	359	3	Georgia
93	Kevin Williams	DT	6-5	311	13	Oklahoma State
94	Cameron Jordan	DE	6-4	287	5	California
95	Tyler Davison	DT	6-2	309	R	Fresno State

SAINTS COACHING STAFF

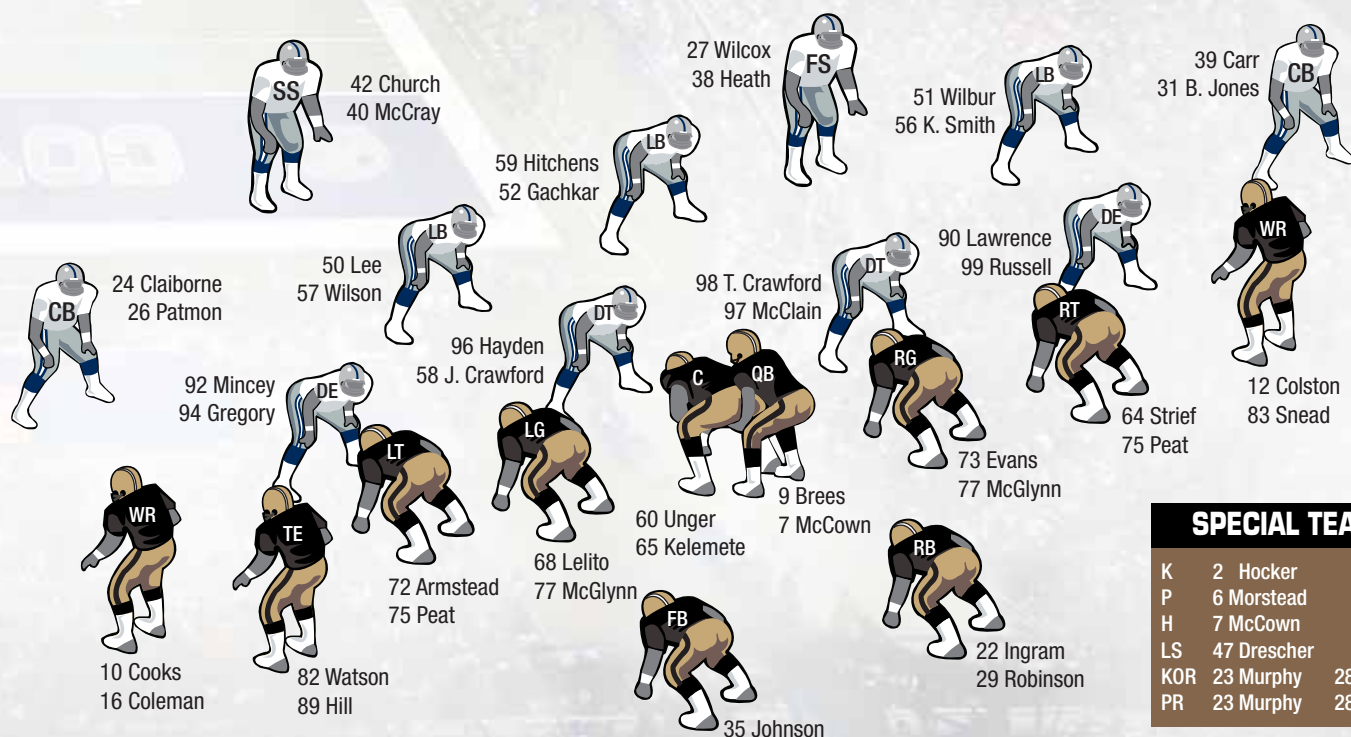
SEAN PAYTON: HEAD COACH

Dennis Allen: Senior Defensive Assistant
Charles Byrd: Assistant Strength and Conditioning
Pete Carmichael: Offensive Coordinator
Dan Dalrymple: Head Strength and Conditioning
Kyle DeVan: Offensive Assistant



Bret Ingalls: Offensive Line
Bill Johnson: Defensive Line
Stan Kwan: Assistant Special Teams
Greg Lewis: Offensive Assistant
Wesley McGriff: Secondary
Greg McMahon: Special Teams Coordinator
John Morton: Wide Receivers
Mike Neu: Quarterbacks
Brendan Nugen: Coaching Assistant
Dan Roushar: Tight Ends
Rob Ryan: Defensive Coordinator
Joel Thomas: Running Backs
Marcus Ungaro: Defensive Assistant
Joe Vitt: Assistant Head Coach/Linebackers
Rob Wenning: Assistant Strength and Conditioning
James Willis: Defensive Assistant/Linebackers
Brian Young: Outside Linebackers

PRACTICE SQUAD: TE Cameron Brate, S Alden Darby, RB DuJuan Harris, WR Seantavious Jones, G Cyril Lemon, DT Ashaad Mabry, TE Chris Manhertz, FB Toben Oporum, DB Sammy Seamster, T Bryan Witzmann



SPECIAL TEAMS

K	2 Hocker
P	6 Morstead
H	7 McCown
LS	47 Drescher
KOR	23 Murphy
PR	23 Murphy
	28 Spiller
	28 Spiller

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SERIES HISTORY

The Saints are 11-16 against the Cowboys, but have dominated the series of late. Dallas won 11 of the first 12 meetings, but has lost eight of the last 10. New Orleans is 7-6 at home, including a lopsided 49-17 victory in the most recent Superdome clash on Nov. 10, 2013. Last season, the Cowboys defeated the Saints, 38-17, at AT&T Stadium in Week 4.

All-Time Results • Dallas Leads Series, 16-11

Date	Site	Winner	Score	Att.
10/15/67	Dallas	Dallas	14-10	52,562
11/12/67	New Orleans	Dallas	27-10	83,437
11/3/68	New Orleans	Dallas	17-3	84,728
9/28/69	New Orleans	Dallas	21-17	79,567
11/9/69	Dallas	Dallas	33-17	68,282
10/17/71	New Orleans	New Orleans	14-24	83,088
9/24/73	Dallas	Dallas	40-3	53,972
9/19/76	New Orleans	Dallas	24-6	61,413
11/19/78	Dallas	Dallas	27-7	57,920
12/19/82	Dallas	Dallas	21-7	64,506
9/25/83	Dallas	Dallas	21-20	62,136
10/21/84	Dallas	Dallas	30-27 (OT)	50,966
10/3/88	New Orleans	New Orleans	17-20	68,474
9/10/89	New Orleans	New Orleans	0-28	66,977
12/2/90	Dallas	Dallas	17-13	60,087
12/8/91	Dallas	Dallas	23-14	64,530
12/19/94	New Orleans	Dallas	24-16	67,323
12/6/98	New Orleans	New Orleans	3-22	65,065
12/24/99	New Orleans	New Orleans	24-31	47,835
12/28/03	New Orleans	New Orleans	7-13	68,451
12/12/04	Dallas	New Orleans	13-27	64,056
12/10/06	Dallas	New Orleans	17-42	63,722
11/25/10	New Orleans	Dallas	24-17	70,213
12/12/04	Dallas	New Orleans	27-30	93,985
12/23/12	Dallas	New Orleans	31-34	92,570
11/10/13	New Orleans	New Orleans	17-49	73,018
9/28/14	Dallas	Dallas	38-17	91,176

2015 Oct. 4 at New Orleans



FLASHBACK

Cowboys head coach Tom Landry earned his 100th career victory with a 40-3 pounding of the Saints at Texas Stadium on *Monday Night Football* on Sept. 24, 1973. **ROGER STAUBACH** was an efficient 10-of-15 for 124 yards and a touchdown and full-back Robert Newhouse scored twice in the decisive 21-point third quarter with a 3-yard run and a 2-yard reception. The Saints fumbled six times and were held to 98 passing yards.

AP Photo



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DALLAS COWBOYS 2015 STATISTICS

As of Sept. 27, 2015

TEAM STATISTICS	DAL	OPP
Total First Downs	71	61
Rushing	17	18
Passing	44	35
Penalty	10	8
3rd Down: Made/Att.	11/29	17/39
3rd Down Pct.	37.9%	43.6%
4th Down: Made/Att.	0/1	1/1
4th Down Pct.	0.0%	100.0%
Possession Avg.	34:27	25:33
Total Net Yards	1142	953
Avg. Per Game	380.7	317.7
Total Plays	187	185
Avg. Per Play	6.1	5.2
Net Yards Rushing	316	264
Avg. Per Game	105.3	88.0
Total Rushes	77	73
Net Yards Passing	826	689
Avg. Per Game	275.3	229.7
Sacked/Yards Lost	5/30	3/13
Gross Yards	856	702
Attempts/Completions	105/83	109/67
Completion Pct.	79.0%	61.5%
Had Intercepted	3	2
Punts/Avg.	12/48.4	15/45.7
Net Punting Avg.	44.8	44.3
Penalties/Yards	26/208	19/174
Fumbles/Ball Lost	5/3	1/1
Touchdowns	9	8
Rushing	4	4
Passing	4	3
Returns	1	1

SCORE BY QUARTERS	1	2	3	4	OT	T
Cowboys	20	20	14	21	0	75
Opponents	10	20	11	34	0	75

SCORING	TDR	TDP	TDRt	2-Pt	PAT	FG	S	TP
Bailey	0	0	0	0	9/9	4/4	0	21
Randle	3	3	0	0	0/0	0/0	0	18
Witten	2	0	2	0	0/0	0/0	0	12
McFadden	1	1	0	0	0/0	0/0	0	6
Wilber	1	0	0	1	0/0	0/0	0	6
Williams	1	0	1	0	0/0	0/0	0	6
Escobar	1	0	1	0	0/0	0/0	0	6
Cowboys	9	4	4	1	9/9	4/4	0	75
Opponents	8	4	3	1	7/7	6/6	1	75

2-Pt. Conversions: Cowboys 0-0, Opponents 0-0

	ATT	COMP	YDS	PCT	AVG	TD	INT	PCT	LG	SKS/YDS	RATING
Romo	72	54	551	75.0%	7.7	3	4.2%	2	2.8%	39	98.8
Weeden	33	29	305	87.9%	9.2	1	3.0%	1	3.0%	42t	102.6
Cowboys	105	83	856	79.0%	8.2	4	3.8%	3	2.9%	42t	101.4
Opponents	109	67	702	61.5%	6.4	3	2.8%	2	1.8%	45t	81.6

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
Randle	48	203	4.2	37t	3
McFadden	22	82	3.7	10	1
Dunbar	2	13	6.5	8	0
Romo	2	11	5.5	12	0
Weeden	3	7	2.3	9	0
Cowboys	77	316	4.1	37t	4
Opponents	73	264	3.6	27	4

RECEIVING	NO	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
Dunbar	21	215	10.2	39	0
Witten	21	181	8.6	19	2
Beasley	12	112	9.3	20	0
Williams	9	144	16.0	42t	1
Randle	6	74	12.3	25	0
Bryant	5	48	9.6	18	0
Escobar	4	24	6.0	13	1
McFadden	3	40	13.3	19	0
Street	1	18	18.0	18	0
Swaim	1	0	0.0	0	0
Cowboys	83	856	10.3	42t	4
Opponents	67	702	10.5	45t	3

INTERCEPTIONS	NO	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
Wilcox	1	24	24.0	24	0
Lee	1	0	0.0	0	0
Cowboys	2	24	12.0	24	0
Opponents	3	31	10.3	19	0

PUNT RETURNS	NO	FC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
Beasley	5	6	18	3.6	12	0
Dunbar	1	0	4	4.0	4	0
Cowboys	6	6	22	3.7	12	0
Opponents	4	6	23	5.8	15	0

KICKOFF RETURNS	NO	YDS	AVG	L	TD
Dunbar	5	129	25.8	32	0
Patmon	2	26	13.0	20	0
Cowboys	7	155	22.1	32	0
Opponents	2	44	22.0	23	0

PUNTING	NO	YDS	AVG	NET	TB	IN20	LG	BL
C.J. ones	12	581	48.4	44.8	1	6	61	0
Cowboys	12	581	48.4	44.8	1	6	61	0
Opponents	15	686	45.7	44.3	0	5	63	1

FIELD GOALS	11-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Bailey	0/0	3/3	1/1	0/0	0/0
Cowboys	0/0	3/3	1/1	0/0	0/0
Opponents	1/1	0/0	2/2	2/2	1/1

RESULTS AND ATTENDANCE

Preseason Games (1-3)					
L	8/13	at San Diego	7-17	57,228	
L	8/23	at San Francisco	6-23	77,624	
L	8/29	MINNESOTA	14-28	86,082	
W	9/3	HOUSTON	21-14	85,067	

Regular-Season Games (2-1)					
W	9/13	NY GIANTS	27-26	93,579	
W	9/20	@ Philadelphia	20-10	69,296	
L	9/27	ATLANTA	28-39	90,345	
Sun.	10/4	@ New Orleans	NBC	7:30 p.m.	
Sun.	10/11	NEW ENGLAND	CBS	3:25 p.m.	
Sun.	10/18	Bye			
Sun.	10/25	@ NY Giants	FOX	3:25 p.m.*	
Sun.	11/1	SEATTLE	FOX	3:25 p.m.*	
Sun.	11/8	PHILADELPHIA	FOX	7:30 p.m.*	
Sun.	11/15	@ Tampa Bay	FOX	Noon*	
Sun.	11/22	@ Miami	FOX	Noon*	
Thurs.	11/26	CAROLINA	CBS	3:30 p.m.	
Mon.	12/7	@ Washington	ESPN	7:30 p.m.	
Sun.	12/13	@ Green Bay	FOX	3:25 p.m.*	
Sat.	12/19	NY JETS	NFLN	7:25 p.m.	
Sun.	12/27	@ Buffalo	FOX	Noon*	
Sun.	1/3	WASHINGTON	FOX	Noon*	



DEFENSIVE STATISTICS (Coaches' Film)

	Solo	Asst.	Total	Sack	Int	FR
Lee	26	7	33	1	1	0
Church	17	9	26	0	0	0
Hitchens	16	7	23	1	0	0
Claiborne	12	4	16	0	0	0
Carr	11	3	14	0	0	0
Hayden	8	1	9	0	0	1
Lawrence	4	5	9	0	0	0
Wilcox	6	2	8	0	1	0
Patmon	5	2	7	0	0	0
B. Jones	4	2	6	0	0	0
Wilber	4	2	6	0	0	0
McClain	3	2	5	0	0	0
J. Crawford	1	3	4	0	0	0
T. Crawford	0	4	4	1	0	0
Heath	1	1	2	0	0	0
Mincey	1	0	1	0	0	0
Gachkar	0	1	1	0	0	0

SPECIAL TEAMS STATISTICS (Coaches' Film)

	Solo	Asst.	Total	FR	BLK
Wilber	3	1	4	0	0
Wilson	2	0	2	0	0
White	1	0	1	0	0
B. Jones	0	1	1	0	0
McCray	0	0	0	0	1





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PUROS TRANCAZOS



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NFC East

	W	L	T
Dallas	2	1	0
NY Giants	1	2	0
Philadelphia	1	2	0
Washington	1	2	0

NFC North

	W	L	T
Green Bay	2	0	0
Minnesota	1	2	0
Detroit	0	2	0
Chicago	0	3	0



NFC South

	W	L	T
Atlanta	3	0	0
Carolina	3	0	0
Tampa Bay	1	2	0
New Orleans	0	3	0

NFC West

	W	L	T
Arizona	3	0	0
San Francisco	1	2	0
Seattle	1	2	0
St. Louis	1	2	0

2015 SCHEDULES

COWBOYS 2-1

9/13	NY Giants	27-26
9/20	at Philadelphia	20-10
9/27	Atlanta	28-39
10/4	at New Orleans	7:30 pm
10/11	New England	3:25 pm
10/18	BYE	
10/25	at NY Giants	3:25 pm
11/1	Seattle	3:25 pm
11/8	Philadelphia	7:30 pm
11/15	at Tampa Bay	Noon
11/22	at Miami	Noon
11/26	Carolina (Thurs.)	3:30 pm
12/7	at Washington (Mon.)	7:30 pm
12/13	at Green Bay	3:25 pm
12/19	NY Jets (Sat.)	7:25 pm
12/27	at Buffalo	Noon
1/3/16	Washington	Noon

GIANTS 1-2

9/13	at Dallas	26-27
9/20	Atlanta	20-24
9/24	Washington (Thurs.)	32-21
10/4	at Buffalo	Noon
10/11	San Francisco	7:30 pm
10/19	at Philadelphia (Mon.)	7:30 pm
10/25	Dallas	3:25 pm
11/1	at New Orleans	Noon
11/8	at Tampa Bay	3:05 pm
11/15	New England	3:25 pm
11/22	BYE	
11/29	at Washington	Noon
12/6	NY Jets	Noon
12/14	at Miami (Mon.)	7:30 pm
12/20	Carolina	Noon
12/27	at Minnesota	Noon
1/3/16	Philadelphia	Noon

EAGLES 1-2

9/14	at Atlanta (Mon.)	24-26
9/20	Dallas	10-20
9/27	at NY Jets	24-17
10/4	at Washington	Noon
10/11	New Orleans	Noon
10/19	NY Giants (Mon.)	7:30 pm
10/25	at Carolina	7:30 pm
11/1	BYE	
11/8	at Dallas	7:30 pm
11/15	Miami	Noon
11/22	Tampa Bay	Noon
11/26	at Detroit (Thurs.)	11:30 am
12/6	at New England	3:25 pm
12/13	Buffalo	Noon
12/20	Arizona	Noon
12/26	Washington (Sat.)	7:25 pm
1/3/16	at NY Giants	Noon

REDSKINS 1-2

9/13	Miami	10-17
9/20	St. Louis	24-10
9/24	at NY Giants (Thurs.)	21-32
10/4	Philadelphia	Noon
10/11	at Atlanta	Noon
10/18	at NY Jets	Noon
10/25	Tampa Bay	Noon
11/1	BYE	
11/8	at New England	Noon
11/15	New Orleans	Noon
11/22	at Carolina	Noon
11/29	NY Giants	Noon
12/7	Dallas (Mon.)	7:30 pm
12/13	at Chicago	Noon
12/20	Buffalo	Noon
12/26	at Philadelphia (Sat.)	7:25 pm
1/3/16	at Dallas	Noon

BEARS 0-3

9/13	Green Bay	23-31
9/20	Arizona	23-48
9/27	at Seattle	0-26
10/4	Oakland	Noon
10/11	at Kansas City	Noon
10/18	at Detroit	Noon
10/25	BYE	
11/1	Minnesota	Noon
11/9	at San Diego (Mon.)	7:30 pm
11/15	at St. Louis	Noon
11/22	Denver	Noon
11/26	at Green Bay (Thurs.)	7:30 pm
12/6	San Francisco	Noon
12/13	Washington	Noon
12/20	at Minnesota	Noon
12/27	at Tampa Bay	Noon
1/3/16	Detroit	Noon

LIONS 0-2

9/13	at San Diego	28-33
9/20	at Minnesota	16-26
9/27	Denver	7:30 pm
10/5	at Seattle (Mon.)	7:30 pm
10/11	Arizona	3:05 pm
10/18	Chicago	Noon
10/25	Minnesota	Noon
11/1	at Kansas City (London)	8:30 am
11/8	BYE	
11/15	at Green Bay	Noon
11/22	Oakland	Noon
11/26	Philadelphia (Thurs.)	11:30 am
12/3	Green Bay (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
12/13	at St. Louis	Noon
12/21	at New Orleans (Mon.)	7:30 pm
12/27	San Francisco	Noon
1/3/16	at Chicago	Noon

PACKERS 2-0

9/13	at Chicago	31-23
9/20	Seattle	27-17
9/28	Kansas City (Mon.)	7:30 pm
10/4	at San Francisco	3:25 pm
10/11	St. Louis	Noon
10/18	San Diego	3:25 pm
10/25	BYE	
11/1	at Denver	7:30 pm
11/8	at Carolina	Noon
11/15	Detroit	Noon
11/22	at Minnesota	Noon
11/26	Chicago (Thurs.)	7:30 pm
12/3	at Detroit (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
12/13	Dallas	3:25 pm
12/20	at Oakland	3:05 pm
12/27	at Arizona	3:25 pm
1/3/16	Minnesota	Noon

VIKINGS 2-1

9/14	at San Francisco (Mon.)	3-20
9/20	Detroit	26-16
9/27	San Diego	31-14
10/4	at Denver	3:25 pm
10/11	BYE	
10/18	Kansas City	Noon
10/25	at Detroit	Noon
11/1	at Chicago	Noon
11/8	St. Louis	Noon
11/15	at Oakland	3:05 pm
11/22	Green Bay	Noon
11/29	at Atlanta	Noon
12/6	Seattle	Noon
12/10	at Arizona (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
12/20	Chicago	Noon
12/27	NY Giants	Noon
1/3/16	at Green Bay	Noon

FALCONS 3-0

9/14	Philadelphia (Mon.)	26-24
9/20	at NY Giants	24-20
9/27	at Dallas	39-28
10/4	Houston	Noon
10/11	Washington	Noon
10/15	at New Orleans (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
10/25	at Tennessee	Noon
11/1	Tampa Bay	Noon
11/8	at San Francisco	3:05 pm
11/15	BYE	
11/22	Indianapolis	Noon
11/29	Minnesota	Noon
12/6	at Tampa Bay	Noon
12/13	at Carolina	Noon
12/20	at Jacksonville	Noon
12/27	Carolina	Noon
1/3/16	New Orleans	Noon

PANTHERS 3-0

9/13	at Jacksonville	20-9
9/20	Houston	24-17
9/27	New Orleans	27-22
10/4	at Tampa Bay	Noon
10/11	BYE	
10/18	at Seattle	3:05 pm
10/25	Philadelphia	7:30 pm
11/2	Indianapolis (Mon.)	7:30 pm
11/8	Green Bay	Noon
11/15	at Tennessee	Noon
11/22	Washington	Noon
11/26	at Dallas (Thurs.)	3:30 pm
12/6	at New Orleans	Noon
12/13	Atlanta	Noon
12/20	at NY Giants	Noon
12/27	at Atlanta	Noon
1/3/16	Tampa Bay	Noon

SAINTS 0-3

9/13	at Arizona	19-31
9/20	Tampa Bay	19-26
9/27	at Carolina	22-27
10/4	Dallas	7:30 pm
10/11	at Philadelphia	Noon
10/15	Atlanta (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
10/25	at Indianapolis	Noon
11/1	NY Giants	Noon
11/8	Tennessee	Noon
11/15	at Washington	Noon
11/22	BYE	
11/29	at Houston	Noon
12/6	Carolina	Noon
12/13	at Tampa Bay	Noon
12/21	Detroit (Mon.)	7:30 pm
12/27	Jacksonville	Noon
1/3/16	at Atlanta	Noon

BUCCANEERS 1-2

9/13	Tennessee	14-42
9/20	at New Orleans	26-19
9/27	at Houston	9-19
10/4	Carolina	Noon
10/11	Jacksonville	Noon
10/18	BYE	
10/25	at Washington	Noon
11/1	at Atlanta	Noon
11/8	NY Giants	3:05 pm
11/15	Dallas	Noon
11/22	at Philadelphia	Noon
11/29	at Indianapolis	Noon
12/6	Atlanta	Noon
12/13	New Orleans	Noon
12/17	at St. Louis (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
12/27	Chicago	Noon
1/3/16	at Carolina	Noon

CARDINALS 3-0

9/13	New Orleans	31-19
9/20	at Chicago	48-23
9/27	San Francisco	47-7
10/4	St. Louis	3:25 pm
10/11	at Detroit	3:05 pm
10/18	at Pittsburgh	Noon
10/26	Baltimore (Mon.)	7:30 pm
11/1	at Cleveland	Noon
11/8	BYE	
11/15	at Seattle	7:30 pm
11/22	Cincinnati	3:05 pm
11/29	at San Francisco	3:05 pm
12/6	at St. Louis	Noon
12/10	Minnesota (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
12/20	at Philadelphia	Noon
12/27	Green Bay	3:25 pm
1/3/16	Seattle	3:25 pm

49ERS (SF) 1-2

9/14	Minnesota (Mon.)	20-3
9/20	at Pittsburgh	18-43
9/27	at Arizona	7-47
10/4	Green Bay	3:25 pm
10/11	at NY Giants	7:30 pm
10/18	Baltimore	3:25 pm
10/22	Seattle (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
11/1	at St. Louis	Noon
11/8	Atlanta	3:05 pm
11/15	BYE	
11/22	at Seattle	3:25 pm
11/29	Arizona	3:05 pm
12/6	at Chicago	Noon
12/13	at Cleveland	Noon
12/20	Cincinnati	7:30 pm
12/27	at Detroit	Noon
1/3/16	St. Louis	3:25 pm

SEAHAWKS 1-2

9/13	at St. Louis	31-34
9/20	at Green Bay	17-27
9/27	Chicago	26-0
10/5	Detroit (Mon.)	7:30 pm
10/11	at Cincinnati	Noon
10/18	Carolina	3:05 pm
10/22	at San Francisco (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
11/1	at Dallas	3:25 pm
11/8	BYE	
11/15	Arizona	7:30 pm
11/22	San Francisco	3:25 pm
11/29	Pittsburgh	3:25 pm
12/6	at Minnesota	Noon
12/13	at Baltimore	7:30 pm
12/20	Cleveland	3:05 pm
12/27	St. Louis	3:25 pm
1/3/16	at Arizona	3:25 pm

RAIERS 1-2

9/13	Seattle	34-31
9/20	at Washington	10-24
9/27	Pittsburgh	6-12
10/4	at Arizona	3:25 pm
10/11	at Green Bay	Noon
10/18	BYE	
10/25	Cleveland	Noon
11/1	San Francisco	Noon
11/8	at Minnesota	Noon
11/15	Chicago	Noon
11/22	at Baltimore	Noon
11/29	at Cincinnati	Noon
12/6	Arizona	Noon
12/13	Detroit	Noon
12/17	Tampa Bay (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
12/27	at Seattle	3:25 pm
1/3/16	at San Francisco	3:25 pm

AFC East

	W	L	T
New England	3	0	0
Buffalo	2	1	0
NY Jets	2	1	0
Miami	1	2	0

AFC North

	W	L	T
Cincinnati	3	0	0
Pittsburgh	2	1	0
Cleveland	1	2	0
Baltimore	0	3	0



AFC South

	W	L	T
Houston	1	2	0
Indianapolis	1	2	0
Jacksonville	1	2	0
Tennessee	1	2	0

AFC West

	W	L	T
Denver	2	0	0
Oakland	2	1	0
Kansas City	1	1	0
San Diego	1	2	0

2015 SCHEDULES

BILLS 2-1

9/13	Indianapolis	27-14
9/20	New England	32-40
9/27	at Miami	41-14
10/4	NY Giants	Noon
10/11	at Tennessee	Noon
10/18	Cincinnati	Noon
10/25	at Jacksonville (London)	8:30 am
11/1	BYE	
11/8	Miami	Noon
11/12	at NY Jets (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
11/23	at New England (Mon.)	7:30 pm
11/29	at Kansas City	Noon
12/6	Houston	Noon
12/13	at Philadelphia	Noon
12/20	at Washington	Noon
12/27	Dallas	Noon
1/3/16	NY Jets	Noon

DOLPHINS 1-2

9/13	at Washington	17-10
9/20	at Jacksonville	20-23
9/27	Buffalo	14-41
10/4	NY Jets (London)	8:30 am
10/11	BYE	
10/18	at Tennessee	Noon
10/25	Houston	Noon
10/29	at New England (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
11/8	at Buffalo	Noon
11/15	at Philadelphia	Noon
11/22	Dallas	Noon
11/29	at NY Jets	Noon
12/6	Baltimore	Noon
12/14	NY Giants (Mon.)	7:30 pm
12/20	at San Diego	3:25 pm
12/27	Indianapolis	Noon
1/3/16	New England	Noon

Patriots 3-0

9/10	Pittsburgh (Thurs.)	28-21
9/20	at Buffalo	40-32
9/27	Jacksonville	51-17
10/4	BYE	
10/11	at Dallas	3:25 pm
10/18	at Indianapolis	7:30 pm
10/25	NY Jets	Noon
10/29	Miami (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
11/8	Washington	Noon
11/15	at NY Giants	3:25 pm
11/23	Buffalo (Mon.)	7:30 pm
11/29	at Denver	7:30 pm
12/6	Philadelphia	3:25 pm
12/13	at Houston	Noon
12/20	Tennessee	Noon
12/27	at NY Jets	Noon
1/3/16	at Miami	Noon

JETS 2-1

9/13	Cleveland	31-10
9/21	at Indianapolis (Mon.)	20-7
9/27	Philadelphia	17-24
10/4	at Miami (London)	8:30 am
10/11	BYE	
10/18	Washington	Noon
10/25	at New England	Noon
11/1	at Oakland	3:05 pm
11/8	Jacksonville	Noon
11/12	Buffalo (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
11/22	at Houston	Noon
11/29	Miami	Noon
12/6	at NY Giants	Noon
12/13	Tennessee	Noon
12/19	at Dallas (Sat.)	7:25 pm
12/27	New England	Noon
1/3/16	at Buffalo	Noon

RAVENS 0-3

9/13	at Denver	13-19
9/20	at Oakland	33-37
9/27	Cincinnati	24-28
10/1	at Pittsburgh (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
10/11	Cleveland	Noon
10/18	at San Francisco	3:25 pm
10/26	at Arizona (Mon.)	7:30 pm
11/1	San Diego	Noon
11/8	BYE	
11/15	Jacksonville	Noon
11/22	St. Louis	Noon
11/30	at Cleveland (Mon.)	7:30 pm
12/6	at Miami	Noon
12/13	Seattle	7:30 pm
12/20	Kansas City	Noon
12/27	Pittsburgh	7:30 pm
1/3/16	at Cincinnati	Noon

BENGALS 3-0

9/13	at Oakland	33-13
9/20	San Diego	24-19
9/27	at Baltimore	28-24
10/4	Kansas City	Noon
10/11	Seattle	Noon
10/18	at Buffalo	Noon
10/25	BYE	
11/1	at Pittsburgh	Noon
11/5	Cleveland (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
11/16	Houston (Mon.)	7:30 pm
11/22	at Arizona	3:05 pm
11/29	St. Louis	Noon
12/6	at Cleveland	Noon
12/13	Pittsburgh	Noon
12/20	at San Francisco	7:30 pm
12/28	at Denver (Mon.)	7:30 pm
1/3/16	Baltimore	Noon

BROWNS 1-2

9/13	at NY Jets	10-31
9/20	Tennessee	28-14
9/27	Oakland	20-27
10/4	at San Diego	3:05 pm
10/11	at Baltimore	Noon
10/18	Denver	Noon
10/25	at St. Louis	Noon
11/1	Arizona	Noon
11/5	at Cincinnati (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
11/15	at Pittsburgh	Noon
11/22	BYE	
11/30	Baltimore (Mon.)	7:30 pm
12/6	Cincinnati	Noon
12/13	San Francisco	Noon
12/20	at Seattle	3:05 pm
12/27	at Kansas City	Noon
1/3/16	Pittsburgh	Noon

Steelers 2-1

9/10	at New England (Thurs.)	21-28
9/20	San Francisco	43-18
9/27	at St. Louis	12-6
10/1	Baltimore (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
10/12	at San Diego (Mon.)	7:30 pm
10/18	Arizona	Noon
10/25	at Kansas City	Noon
11/1	Cincinnati	Noon
11/8	Oakland	Noon
11/15	Cleveland	Noon
11/22	BYE	
11/29	at Seattle	3:25 pm
12/6	Indianapolis	7:30 pm
12/13	at Cincinnati	Noon
12/20	Denver	3:25 pm
12/27	at Baltimore	7:30 pm
1/3/16	at Cleveland	Noon

TEXANS 1-2

9/13	Kansas City	20-27
9/20	at Carolina	17-24
9/27	Tampa Bay	19-9
10/4	at Atlanta	Noon
10/8	Indianapolis (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
10/18	at Jacksonville	Noon
10/25	at Miami	Noon
11/1	Tennessee	Noon
11/8	BYE	
11/16	at Cincinnati (Mon.)	7:30 pm
11/22	NY Jets	Noon
11/29	New Orleans	Noon
12/6	at Buffalo	Noon
12/13	New England	Noon
12/20	at Indianapolis	Noon
12/27	at Tennessee	Noon
1/3/16	Jacksonville	Noon

COLTS 1-2

9/13	at Buffalo	14-27
9/21	NY Jets (Mon.)	7-20
9/27	at Tennessee	35-33
10/4	Jacksonville	Noon
10/8	at Houston (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
10/18	New England	7:30 pm
10/25	New Orleans	Noon
11/2	at Carolina (Mon.)	7:30 pm
11/8	Denver	3:25 pm
11/15	BYE	
11/22	at Atlanta	Noon
11/29	Tampa Bay	Noon
12/6	at Pittsburgh	7:30 pm
12/13	at Jacksonville	Noon
12/20	Houston	Noon
12/27	at Miami	Noon
1/3/16	Tennessee	Noon

JAGUARS 1-2

9/13	Carolina	9-20
9/20	Miami	23-20
9/27	at New England	17-51
10/4	at Indianapolis	Noon
10/11	at Tampa Bay	Noon
10/18	Houston	Noon
10/25	Buffalo (London)	8:30 am
11/1	BYE	
11/8	at NY Jets	Noon
11/15	at Baltimore	Noon
11/19	Tennessee (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
11/29	San Diego	Noon
12/6	at Tennessee	Noon
12/13	Indianapolis	Noon
12/20	Atlanta	Noon
12/27	at New Orleans	Noon
1/3/16	at Houston	Noon

TITANS 1-2

9/13	at Tampa Bay	42-12
9/20	at Cleveland	14-28
9/27	Indianapolis	33-35
10/4	BYE	
10/11	Buffalo	Noon
10/18	Miami	Noon
10/25	Atlanta	Noon
11/1	at Houston	Noon
11/8	at New Orleans	Noon
11/15	Carolina	Noon
11/19	at Jacksonville (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
11/29	Oakland	Noon
12/6	Jacksonville	Noon
12/13	at NY Jets	Noon
12/20	at New England	Noon
12/27	Houston	Noon
1/3/16	at Indianapolis	Noon

BRONCOS 2-0

9/13	Baltimore	19-13
9/17	at Kansas City (Thurs.)	31-24
9/27	at Detroit	7:30 pm
10/4	Minnesota	3:25 pm
10/11	at Oakland	3:25 pm
10/18	at Cleveland	Noon
10/25	BYE	
11/1	Green Bay	7:30 pm
11/8	at Indianapolis	3:25 pm
11/15	Kansas City	3:25 pm
11/22	at Chicago	Noon
11/29	New England	7:30 pm
12/6	at San Diego	3:05 pm
12/13	Oakland	3:05 pm
12/20	at Pittsburgh	3:25 pm
12/28	Cincinnati (Mon.)	7:30 pm
1/3/16	San Diego	3:25 pm

CHIEFS 1-1

9/13	at Houston	27-20
9/17	Denver (Thurs.)	24-31
9/28	at Green Bay (Mon.)	7:30 pm
10/4	at Cincinnati	Noon
10/11	Chicago	Noon
10/18	at Minnesota	Noon
10/25	Pittsburgh	Noon
11/1	Detroit (London)	8:30 am
11/8	BYE	
11/15	at Denver	3:25 pm
11/22	at San Diego	7:30 pm
11/29	Buffalo	Noon
12/6	at Oakland	3:05 pm
12/13	San Diego	Noon
12/20	at Baltimore	Noon
12/27	Cleveland	Noon
1/3/16	Oakland	Noon

RAIDERS 2-1

9/13	Cincinnati	13-33
9/20	Baltimore	37-33
9/27	at Cleveland	27-20
10/4	at Chicago	Noon
10/11	Denver	3:25 pm
10/18	BYE	
10/25	at San Diego	3:05 pm
11/1	NY Jets	3:05 pm
11/8	at Pittsburgh	Noon
11/15	Minnesota	3:05 pm
11/22	at Detroit	Noon
11/29	at Tennessee	Noon
12/6	Kansas City	3:05 pm
12/13	at Denver	3:05 pm
12/20	Green Bay	3:05 pm
12/24	San Diego (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
1/3/16	at Kansas City	Noon

CHARGERS 1-2

9/13	Detroit	33-28
9/20	at Cincinnati	19-24
9/27	at Minnesota	14-31
10/4	Cleveland	3:05 pm
10/12	Pittsburgh (Mon.)	7:30 pm
10/18	at Green Bay	3:25 pm
10/25	Oakland	3:05 pm
11/1	at Baltimore	Noon
11/9	Chicago (Mon.)	7:30 pm
11/15	BYE	
11/22	Kansas City	7:30 pm
11/29	at Jacksonville	Noon
12/6	Denver	3:05 pm
12/13	at Kansas City	Noon
12/20	Miami	3:25 pm
12/24	at Oakland (Thurs.)	7:25 pm
1/3/16	at Denver	3:25 pm

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MEET THE GROCER

Possibly apocryphal favorite football story: Legend has it that the Cleveland Browns, under legendary Hall of Fame coach Paul Brown, lost a difficult and important road game. The team got on the bus to the airport with Brown, as was his custom, sitting grim-faced and tight-lipped in the seat over the driver's right shoulder.

As bad luck would have it, the driver got lost, and he knew it. In the dark mist, one wrong turn led to another, and the more lost he got, the more he sweated. By the time the poor fellow found the airport, 45 minutes later than scheduled, he was so nervous he was practically sweating blood.

In a panic, the overmatched driver turned to Brown and said, "Please, Coach. I'm so sorry. This has never happened before and I don't know why it did tonight. Please, I beg you not to be too angry. I need this job."

Never blinking, not raising his voice, Brown evenly looked the miserable driver in the eye and said, "Son, I'm not mad at you. But I sure would love to have a little chat with the dumb sonofabuck who hired you."

This story comes to mind as one key Cowboys player after another goes down, and the player personnel office under Will McClay gets the call for reinforcements.

The only constant in the NFL is change. Player rosters routinely turn over around 20-25 percent from one year to the next. Thank you, free agency and salary cap. But when the Cowboys took the field against Atlanta, their 53-man roster included 10 percent who weren't with the team when they arrived in training camp. Not from last season's division champs, from this year's training camp.

The Cowboys media guide lists Will McClay's title as "Senior Director, College/Pro

Personnel." It may be time to start calling him the "Grocer."

You may recall one of the most famous NFL quotes of recent memory, from former Cowboys coach Bill Parcells, when he was about-to-be-former coach of the New England Patriots. Wanting more control in personnel acquisition, Parcells said, "If they want you to cook the dinner, at least they ought to let you shop for the groceries."

McClay has found a way to get the chefs, the farmers and the owners of the restaurant to sit at the same table and like it.



It's not as if the Cowboys are the only team in the NFL that knows how to do this. Every club has a personnel department. And many of them have tremendous dysfunction. McClay is a scout, but he's been more. He was a pretty good defensive back at Rice. He had a coaching turn in the Arena League, including with the Cowboys-owned Desperadoes. In the Arena offseason, he assisted then-Cowboys

secondary coaches Dave Campo and Brett Maxie. He has worked his way through the politics and labyrinths of multiple organizations in multiple leagues, and he has learned that relationships that thrive make everyone better.

"The roster is never final," McClay said last week, taking a momentary break from searching for possible new backup quarterbacks. "You almost never have 100 percent agreement. The key is to make sure the scouts know what the coaches want and the coaches believe that when we bring them a player, it's because we think he can do what they want."

In fact, "can" is one of McClay's favorite words. "When we look at players," he says, "we ask, 'Tell me what he CAN do, and let's go from there.' A system needs everyone working together. You get that system by trial and error, seeing what fits. When we understand each other, it all works."

So it's draft day, and the Cowboys are out of picks, but tight end Geoff Swaim is sitting there. McClay and his scouting team can make the case to coaches why this player CAN help, and they all make the case to management that it's worth a sixth-round pick to get him.

Linebackers go down in camp, and the Grocer's team finds Keith Smith, who had been released in the offseason. They find he's a better player than last year. He makes the roster.

Every team in the NFL brings in players during camp and during the season. The Cowboys, in recent years, have found more useful ones than seems like their share.

"There are 32 teams looking to get better," says McClay. "There are not enough good players to go around."

Makes it all the more important to have the right Grocer.

*Brad Sham is in his 37th season as The Voice of the Dallas Cowboys.
The award-winning broadcaster is an inaugural inductee into the Texas Radio Hall of Fame.*

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